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Sharing in God's Mission:

The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela

and

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States

1960-1980

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. T. Sminia,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de faculteit der Godgeleerdheid
op woensdag 10 mei 2006 om 10.45 uur
in het auditorium van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

door

Carmelo Álvarez

geboren te Bayamón, Puerto Rico

promotoren: prof.dr. M.E. Brinkman
 prof.dr. C. van der Laan

To Raquel, Nina, and Margarita

In loving memory of Mami, Papi, and Elizabeth.

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PREFACE

The completion of this research and its publication has been both an academic and spiritual satisfaction. It closes an important part of my life in ministry both in the church and the seminary. But it also affirms the blessing in that ministry: to be able to combine these two separate dimensions of ministry in a creative tension.

This journey begins in Puerto Rico as a young pastor trying to discern the best way to more effectively serve God's reign. My initial conviction that pastoral ministry was my vocation expanded as my ministry grew more multifaceted. Preaching, teaching, lecturing and advising became integrated in a dynamic process of local and international interaction. The journey included doctoral studies in Church History at Emory University (1971-1974). From 1974 until 1992 the ministry consisted of theological education and ecumenical service at the Latin American Biblical Seminary (Biblical University) in Costa Rica, Latin American Council of Churches, and the Ecumenical Research Department in Costa Rica. Upon my return to the United States (1992-2002) I was again deeply involved in theological education at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 2002 the Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission (CEPLA) and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV) extended an invitation for me to join them as a missionary-consultant for both organizations, and the Common Global Board Ministries (CGBM) made the appointment.

The narrative shared in this dissertation is intended as a witness of what the Pentecostal churches have shared with me for more than thirty years, as well as what my own churches in Puerto Rico and the United States have contributed to my life and ministry. I hope this book will help portray the complex, yet rewarding, experience of sharing for more than forty years in mission with two very different protestant denominations. The common witness of these two denominations in ecumenical partnership is a story worth telling to other churches and to the world.

Many people have shared this journey, in different moments and circumstances. My wife Raquel has been a constant support and a faithful companion all the way. Her own service as a missionary and executive in mission is a blessing to us all. My two daughters, Nina and Margarita, are the living expression of God's gift of love to us. They have endured in sharing and learning in mission during all these years in which they also became witnesses. Carmen Rodríguez-Rivera, my sister-in-law, provided an invaluable service in translating important material. The loving memory of my parents, Carmelo and Elisa, and my sister Elizabeth has been a witness of God's love and peace as they continue to be a living presence in our lives. To this my loving family, *mi familia*, I dedicate this book.

The late Robert A. Thomas and my friend Bill Nottingham deserve my deepest gratitude and recognition for supporting our ministry in good and bad times, always believing that our call was from God.

I have served as a missionary under four executives in the Latin America and the Caribbean, first with the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada, and then with the Common Global Board of Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada and the United Church of Christ. These executives, Bill Nottingham, the late Ann Douglass, David Vargas, and Félix Ortiz, not only supported my work as a missionary, but also trusted in my capacity and willingness to serve, particularly in the Pentecostal churches. David Vargas was a key person in discerning,

pondering, and supporting in very decisive moment.

David Bundy and Julio de Santa Ana have been trusted friends and trusted colleagues. Over the years they have offered much encouragement, criticism and insightful observation in my academic work. My colleagues at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis have been in more than one way a blessing from God. During the years I have served in different capacities at CTS under the leadership of Richard D.N. Dickinson and Edward L. Wheeler as presidents. I enjoyed their trusted friendship and support.

In the process of completing this dissertation there are three persons that gave me their full support: Joyce Krauser, faculty secretary at CTS, who embraced this research as her own and offered not only professional assistance but also shared my passion for this project. Prof. Dr. Cornelis van der Laan and Prof Dr. Martien E. Brinkman, my advisors, provided not only the necessary advice and counsel, but also shared my enthusiasm, inspiring me to make every effort to conclude this investigation.

Bishop Gamaliel Lugo of the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela and his wife Elida have also offered their own vision, enthusiasm, and support during all these years. The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela will always be close to my heart and mind: *Yo les amo en el amor del Señor.*

To all of you who share this vision and walk in this mission, *missio Dei*,
¡Gracias, Thank you!

ACRONYMS

ACE	Evangelical Christian Aid <i>Ayuda Cristiana Evangélica</i>
ACMS	American Christian Mission Society <i>Sociedad Cristiana Misionera Americana</i>
AIPRAL	Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America <i>Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas Latinoamericanas</i>
AMS	American Mission Society <i>Sociedad Misionera Americana</i>
CBI	Intensive Biblical Course <i>Curso Bíblico Intensivo</i>
CBP	Christian Board of Publication, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) <i>Junta Cristiana de Publicaciones, Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo)</i>
CC(DoC)	Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States <i>Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo)</i>
CCA	Christian Conference of Asia <i>Conferencia Cristiana de Asia</i>
CCC	Caribbean Council of Churches <i>Conferencia de Iglesias del Caribe</i>
CCLA	Cooperation Committee on Latin America <i>Comité de Cooperación para América Latina</i>
CEHILA	Latin American Commission on Church History <i>Comisión de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia Latinoamericana</i>
CELA	Latin American Evangelical Conference <i>Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana</i>
CELADEC	Evangelical Commission on Christian Education in Latin America <i>Comisión Evangélica Latinoamericana de Educación Cristiana</i>
CELAM	Latin American Conference of Bishops <i>Conferencia Episcopal Latinoamericana</i>
CELEP	Latin American Center for Pastoral Studies <i>Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios Pastorales</i>
CEPAS	Pastoral Education Course <i>Curso de Estudios Pastorales</i>
CEPLA	Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission <i>Comisión Evangélica Pentecostal Latinoamericana</i>
CESEP	Ecumenical Center for Popular Education <i>Centro Ecuménico de Educación Popular</i>
CEVEJ	Evangelical Committee for Justice of Venezuela <i>Comité Evangélico Venezolana por la Justicia</i>
CGBM	Common Global Board of Ministries <i>Junta Común de Ministerios Globales</i>
CLADE II	II Latin American Congress on Evangelism <i>II Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización</i>

CLAI	Latin American Council of Churches <i>Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias</i>
CPCC	Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba <i>Iglesia Cristiana Pentecostal de Cuba</i>
CUPSA	United Publishing House <i>Casa Unida de Publicaciones</i>
CWMB	Christian Women's Mission Board <i>Junta Misionera de Mujeres Cristianas</i>
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism <i>Comisión de Misión Mundial y Evangelización</i>
DEI	Ecumenical Research Department of Costa Rica <i>Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones</i>
DHM	Division of Homeland Ministries <i>División de Ministerios Domésticos</i>
DOM	Division of Overseas Ministries <i>División de Ministerios de Ultramar</i>
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians <i>Asociación Ecuménica de Teólogos de Tercer Mundos</i>
EPLA	Latin American Pentecostal Encounter <i>Encuentro Pentecostal Latinoamericano</i>
ESR	Ecumenical Sharing of Resources <i>Compartir Ecuménico de Recursos</i>
FCMS	Foreign Christian Missionary Society <i>Sociedad Cristiana Misionera Extranjera</i>
IMC	International Missionary Council <i>Consejo Misionero Internacional</i>
INDEF	Institute of In-Depth Evangelism <i>Instituto de Evangelismo a Fondo</i>
ISAL	Church and Society <i>Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina</i>
JPIC	Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation <i>Justicia, Paz e Integridad de la Creación</i>
NCCC-USA	National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America <i>Consejo Nacional de Iglesias de Cristo de los Estados Unidos de América</i>
PRODIADIS	Distance Education Program of the Biblical University of Costa Rica <i>Programa Diversificado a Distancia, Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana de Costa Rica</i>
SCM	Society for Christian Mission <i>Sociedad Misionera Cristiana</i>
SEPADE	Evangelical Service for Development <i>Servicio Evangélico para el Desarrollo</i>
UCBWM	United Church Board for World Ministries <i>Junta de la Iglesia Unida para Ministerios Mundiales</i>
UCC	United Church of Christ

	<i>Iglesia Unida de Cristo</i>
UCCP	United Church of Christ in the Philippines
	<i>Iglesia Unida de Cristo en las Filipinas</i>
UCMS	United Christian Missionary Society
	<i>Sociedad Cristiana Misionera Unida</i>
UEPV	Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela
	<i>Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana</i>
UJIC	Union of Youth Imitating Christ
	<i>Unión Juvenil Imitadores de Cristo</i>
ULAJE	Evangelical Union of Latin American Youth
	<i>Unión Latinoamericana de Juventudes Evangélicas</i>
UMIFE	Women's Missionary Union
	<i>Unión Misionera Femenil</i>
UNELAM	Evangelical Unity in Latin America
	<i>Unidad Evangélica Latinoamericana</i>
UNISA	University of South Africa
	<i>Universidad de África del Sur</i>
UTSQR	Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review, New York City
	<i>Revista Cuatrimestral, Seminario Unión, Nueva York</i>
WACC	World Association of Christian Communication
	<i>Asociación Mundial para la Comunicación Cristiana</i>
WCC	World Council of Churches
	<i>Consejo Mundial de Iglesias</i>
WSCF	World Student Christian Federation
	<i>Federación Universal Movimiento Estudiantil Cristiano</i>

Summary in English

This dissertation has been written amidst a struggle for identity and mission. It examines the ways in which Mainline Protestants and Pentecostals are trying to crystallize their identities as agents and servants of God's mission in Latin America and the Caribbean as its writer strives to shape himself and his church in service to God. It is both an academic and pastoral quest for the writer of this investigation.

The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV), an autonomous pentecostal denomination, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, a Mainline Protestant denomination, established an ecumenical partnership in 1963 that remains a positive force today. The initial steps in establishing this relationship began when Rev. Edmundo Jordán, Puerto Rican Disciples pastor and Puerto Rican Assemblies of God missionary to Venezuela, initiated informal and exploratory conversations that came to fruition in the 1961 II Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA) in Lima, Peru. Mae Yoho Ward, then Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS), made the initial contacts at CELA to enable this ecumenical partnership.

For four decades these two very different denominations have shared in an ecumenical partnership, primarily in the sharing of ecumenical resources. The first two decades of ecumenical partnership were formative, establishing the foundations for a more permanent and solid relationship. The concrete praxis of sharing ecumenical resources between these two denominations was deepened by an explicit theological and missiological reflection. This unique ecumenical experiment deserves serious theological analysis, the study of which will contribute to contemporary theological and missiological discussions on ecumenical sharing in mission.

The theoretical framework is based on two biblical-theological and missiological concepts: *missio Dei* and *koinonía*. *Missio Dei* is analyzed in the context of the ecumenical discussions of the past four decades: its Trinitarian implications of *missio Dei*, its relationship to an ecumenical and pentecostal thinking on the Holy Spirit, and its role in mission. The *koinonía* concept is examined as a partnership within the ecumenical movement, particularly the practical application of sharing in partnership as expressed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) as Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR). The writer traces the evolution and usage of these two concepts and their influence on ecumenical missionary theology, particularly that of the Disciples of Christ. The main objective of this dissertation is to show both the challenges and long-term success of one example of sharing in God's mission and thus to elaborate a consistent and solid argument for that model of church work.

The main thesis of this dissertation is that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela have shared for four decades in a praxis of mission through ecumenical partnership that has become a successful model of a true and mutual partnership.

The scope of this dissertation focuses on two decades, 1960-1980, but it also touches on circumstances before the official relationship started in 1963 as well as further developments beyond the two decades. A main focus of this discussion is the theological reflection that directs and sustains these mission strategies. An extensive analysis of official documents, letters, and interviews provides some of the key questions arising within these two denominations that allow the writer to present an in-depth evaluation of this particular partnership. 1) How do the two denominations articulate and reflect theologically on their praxis? 2) What are the predominant theological motives that undergird their theologies of mission? 3) Which models of mission

inform and influence their theologies of mission? 4) Do these denominations hold a common theological understanding of their sharing in God's mission? 5) How do they develop a sharing/learning process? 6) What are some issues and challenges for both denominations? 6) How do they move forward in mission? 8) How can they continue to improve and deepen an ongoing ecumenical partnership?

The relationship between these two very different denominations is a unique experiment in ecumenical sharing. This dissertation is the first attempt to analyze and evaluate these relations.

The research presented in this dissertation was conducted in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. Venezuela is the country that has received more attention because of the focus on the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in relationship with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States. Extensive travel has taken the writer all over the Venezuelan territory in the last three decades.

The writer of this dissertation claims that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela have shared for four decades in a process that started as an experiment in cooperation and became a successful ecumenical partnership based on equality, mutuality, and respect.

In the Chapter I the author sets forth the dissertation's theoretical framework, defines the thesis as a forty-year success of the ecumenical partnership between the Disciples and the UEPV, and introduces the concepts of *missio Dei* and *koinonía*. He shows the importance of the search for identity and mission both as a defining factor for denominational identity and as the foundation of relationships between groups. Chapter I describes two models of mission strategy (Mainline Protestant and Pentecostal), analyzes the joint mission strategy of the partnership, and highlights the ESR model of partnership. Chapter I also outlines the methodology, principles, and delimitations for this study, which includes performing an examination of context and a historical criticism of root causes behind the character of the churches through participation/observation, interviews, and letters, and documents. Eight key questions are raised early in the introduction and were addressed as the chapters unfolded.

The theological elements of mission are provided in the Chapter II through an examination of different traditions and diverse theological positions while searching for consensus on the key concept of *missio Dei* as God's missionary action and emphasizing the holistic, integral, and inclusive dimensions of mission. The conciliar process is shown to follow the same path of affirming mission as *missio Dei*. Another predominant motive in ecumenical circles has been *koinonía* as communion in Christian fellowship, worship, and witness in service. This chapter shows that since the Church is called to a commitment to solidarity and unity while caring for God's creation, *koinonía* as partnership is seen as ecumenical cooperation in concrete sharing of resources. A feminist theologian is quoted to claim that real partnership requires the construction of better relationships for the future of all humanity. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and the Sao Paulo Process are cited as offering a common witness in moving away from the colonial heritage into self-determination, self-support, and dignity.

The main purpose of Chapter III is to stress that the Mainline Protestant missions in Venezuela faced the crucial issue of determining their identities by affirming their heritage while looking toward a promising future. These churches confronted many obstacles in this process, including their own internal divisions as well as the historical conflict within Latin America and the Caribbean. Churches and ecumenical organizations struggled to live in mission and unity as a

visible sharing in God's mission and the coming of God's reign. Regional and national conferences, consultations, and continental assemblies promoted a conciliar process that was expressed concretely in the founding of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) in 1978. Here ecumenical vocation and missional commitment were intertwined. The liberal missionary model was able to move from the influence of an expansive "liberal project" promoted by the United States to a holistic, viable, and relevant Protestantism within the historical conditions of Latin America and the Caribbean where the church in a new diaspora was a predominant theological motive.

Chapter IV delineates the mission strategy of Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, defining their identity and mission as an ecumenism of the Spirit. Pentecostal church leaders were active participants in promoting this style of ecumenism and in establishing partnerships with mainline denominations. Mission and unity was envisioned as a gift of the Spirit that resulted in the promotion of justice, hope, and peace. CEPLA was established as a venue for dialogue and an instrument to enhance partnerships and encourage strategies for social action and evangelism. As inheritors of ecumenism of the Spirit blowing in the Azusa Street movement and other revivals and spiritual movements in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean received inspiration and a missionary impulse in what was already a diverse and complex Pentecostal movement. The three predominant mission models listed are the missionary expansive model connected primarily to United States based boards of missions, a divine healing neopentecostalism, and the indigenous autonomous movement. All three mission models responded to the pressing needs of the poor and oppressed that have comprised the majority of members in the Pentecostal churches of Latin America and the Caribbean to this day.

Chapter V traces the shaping of a strategy for mission within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States. This denomination grew out of the restoration movement but opted for an ecumenical commitment in the promotion of mission and unity. The Disciples developed a theology of mission as God's mission and an integral mission strategy in which the central theme of "kingdom building" emerged as an ecclesiology with three distinctive emphases: the members of the church as citizens of the kingdom, the kinship of God's people as active agents in promoting mission in unity for the kingdom, and the kingdom as communion with God in ecumenical global cooperation for justice and the spread of the Gospel. In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, *missio Dei* was manifest as unity in diversity, with identity and mission in a creative tension between the church and the kingdom of God. Mission as God's mission implied retaining the freedom to examine and interpret while accepting a consensus on the essential doctrinal tenets.

In Chapter VI the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela is presented as an autonomous and autochthonous movement that opted for an ecumenical vocation and ecumenical relationships. Its strategy for mission integrated spiritual formation, leadership development, and the capacity to confront new challenges and conflicts. According to this strategy the Church is empowered by the Spirit to promote and witness to Christian unity. The UEPV was a pioneering force in reclaiming the Bolivarian ideal of a "Great Motherland." The UEPV emphasized that the power of the Holy Spirit equips the people to respond to the crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean and to heal their own internal crisis as a church, as well as imparting the vision to discern the signs of the times and thus to better serve God's people. The UEPV is shown to affirm a vision that maintained a balance between its mission as a Pentecostal church and its ecumenical commitment.

Chapter VII traces the relationship between the Disciples of Christ and the UEPV that started as an experiment in cooperation and mutual fellowship and grew to become a solid ecumenical partnership. The two denominations continued to honor differences and diversity by maintaining the identity and the integrity of each denomination. They reaffirmed an ecumenical commitment and vocation to continue working together in mission. The learning-sharing model in the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources was one of the key elements in this vital and positive ecumenical relationship.

These two denominations have articulated and reflected theologically on their praxis by developing *missio Dei* and *Koinonia* as strategies of mission that direct this praxis toward consistency and coherence while shaping and clarifying their identity and mission.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (DOC) and UEPV have developed a learning-sharing process of mutual accountability, a humble attitude to deal with misunderstandings and conflicts, and a determination to stay together and deepen their ecumenical commitment.

Both denominations have made the commitment to continue in their common vision for mission together, remaining open to dialogue, designing and promoting common projects, and planning new initiatives while consolidating existing projects. The denominations continue in the sharing of ecumenical resources such as the exchange of delegations and missionary personnel, educational funding, women's ministries support, social programs for poor women, and evangelistic programs.

Each denomination can improve on deepening this ecumenical partnership by exploring new strategies for mission. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States can benefit from the evangelistic fervor and experience of the UEPV. The UEPV can learn from the experience in ministries of compassion, solidarity, and social action gained by the Disciples of Christ during more than 150 years of existence. The accumulated experience of these 40 years of ecumenical partnership forms a solid foundation upon which to continue exploring new adventures in mission.

One element that makes this mutual partnership a successful model is its immersion in concrete experiences and positive results, even during critical times. First, a mutual partnership requires speaking the truth to each other (Ephesians 4:25b) in order to be accountable in trust and respect for each other. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the UEPV have followed this practice in several crucial moments: During the initial contacts from 1959 to 1972, an experiment in cooperation was established, avoiding any false expectations but cultivating a frank and honest dialogue while learning and sharing with one another. The second crucial moment came in the 1972-1980 period when the DOM and the UEPV decided to move forward in consolidating their ecumenical partnership, in sharing missionary personnel for specific projects, in providing funds, and in sharing the expertise of qualified professionals. The third crucial moment came in the years 1981-1983 when the UEPV suffered a serious internal conflict that almost destroyed the organization. During the UEPV XXVII Convention, August 25-28, 1983, the DOM stood with them by sending the Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rev. David Vargas, which resulted in both churches confirming their intent stay together in mission. To further solidify this commitment, Rev. Gamaliel Lugo was invited as an international guest at the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Des Moines, October 1985. The fourth crucial moment came during the consultation "Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit" in Indianapolis in 1997. This consultation provided a setting and opportunity for the UEPV and the other

Pentecostal churches now in partnership to “speak the truth in love” once more. Participants confirmed that many weaknesses, obstacles, and dilemmas needed to be addressed by both sides (see Chapter VII, pp.203-207), but despite these challenges the participants were committed to staying together in mission, facing the challenges of the times.

Another element contributing to the success of the mutual partnership model is that sharing in God’s mission requires a mutual openness in correcting mistakes, improving relationships, and enhancing mutual ecumenical commitments. Between 1983 and 2004 the Executive Committee of the UEPV promoted an open dialogue with all the congregations that left that denomination between 1981 and 1983. Many of those congregations returned to the full membership in the UEPV, and others remain in cordial and open communication, sharing in many aspects of mission. The Executive Committee of the UEPV conducted a discernment process between 1984 and 1986 on ecumenical commitment, leading to a public statement at the XXX Convention at Hosanna Church in Guanare, August, 1986. At the XXXI Convention in “*Comunidad El Triunfo*” in Valencia, 1987, the UEPV publicly declared its ecumenical vocation, reaffirmed its Pentecostal identity, and affirmed its “preferential option for the poor.” This whole process made it clear that UEPV wanted to continue in an ecumenical partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the ecumenical movement in Latin America and the rest of the world.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela have moved forward in mission toward equality and justice and have proven that a partnership based on mutual respect and trust, the sharing of human, educational, financial, spiritual and theological resources is the best foundation for an ongoing partnership in God’s mission.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt langs welke wegen mainline protestanten en pentecostalen hun identiteit als middelaren van Gods zending in Latijns Amerika trachten vorm te geven. De Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV), een autonome pentecostale denominatie, en de Christian Church (Disciples of Christ, afgekort DOC) in de Verenigde Staten, een mainline protestantse denominatie, zijn in 1963 een oecumenisch partnerschap aangegaan, dat tot vandaag een positieve uitwerking heeft.

De eerste twee decennia waren formatief, waarin de fundering voor een meer permanente en solide relatie werd gelegd. De concrete praxis van de uitwisseling van bronnen werd verdiept door een expliciete theologische en missiologische reflectie. Een theologische analyse van dit unieke oecumenisch experiment zal bijdragen aan hedendaagse theologische en missiologische discussies over oecumenische uitwisseling in zending.

Het theoretisch kader is gebaseerd op twee bijbels-theologische en missiologische concepten: *missio Dei* and *koinonía*. *Missio Dei* wordt in de context van de oecumenische discussie van de laatste vier decennia geanalyseerd: de trinitarische implicaties van *missio Dei*, de relatie tot oecumenische en pentecostale reflectie over de Heilige Geest, en de rol in zending. Het concept *koinonía* wordt onderzocht als een partnerschap met de oecumenische beweging, in het bijzonder de praktische toepassing hiervan, door de Wereldraad van Kerken uitgedrukt als Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR). De schrijver traceert de evolutie en het gebruik van deze twee concepten en hun invloed op de oecumenische theologie van de zending, in het bijzonder die van de DOC.

De stelling van dit proefschrift is dat het oecumenisch partnerschap van de Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in de Verenigde Staten en de Evangelical Pentecostal Union van Venezuela gedurende vier decennia een succesvol model van waarachtig en wederkerig partnerschap in zending is geworden.

Dit proefschrift richt zich op twee decennia, 1960-1980. Ook de omstandigheden voorafgaand aan de start van de officiële dialoog in 1963 worden behandeld, alsmede een aantal ontwikkelingen na deze twee decennia. Nadruk zal liggen op de theologische reflectie welke deze zendingsstrategie stuurt en onderhoudt. Een uitgebreide analyse van officiële documenten, brieven en interviews brengen de sleutelvragen naar boven, die binnen deze twee denominaties opkomen. Dit geeft de schrijver de mogelijkheid een diepgaande evaluatie van dit partnerschap te presenteren: 1) Hoe articuleren en reflecteren deze twee denominaties theologisch op hun praxis? 2) Wat zijn de voornaamste motieven die hun theologie van de zending ondersteunen? 3) Welke zendingsmodellen informeren en beïnvloeden hun theologie van de zending? 4) Hebben deze twee denominaties een gemeenschappelijk theologisch begrip van hun uitwisseling in Gods zending? 5) Hoe ontwikkelen zij een uitwisseling- en leerproces? 6) Wat zijn belangrijke onderwerpen en uitdagingen voor beide denominaties? 6) Hoe gaan zij verder in zending? 8) Hoe kunnen zij hun voortgaande oecumenische partnerschap verbeteren en verdiepen?

Dit proefschrift is de eerste poging deze unieke relatie tussen twee heel verschillende denominaties te analyseren en evalueren.

In hoofdstuk I wordt het theoretisch kader uiteengezet, de stelling geformuleerd en de begrippen *missio Dei* en *koinonía* geïntroduceerd. Het toont het belang van het zoeken naar identiteit en zending, zowel voor de denominationele identiteit als voor de basis van de relatie tussen de groepen. Twee modellen van zendingsstrategie (mainline protestant en pentecostal)

worden beschreven en geanalyseerd in verhouding tot het ESR model van partnerschap. Verder worden de methodologie, principes en beperkingen van de studie aangegeven. Acht sleutelvragen worden geformuleerd die in de hoofdstukken worden behandeld.

In hoofdstuk II worden verschillende tradities en diverse theologische posities onderzocht, op zoek naar een consensus inzake het begrip *missio Dei* als Gods zendingsactie met nadruk op de holistische, integrale, en inclusieve dimensies van zending. Het conciliair proces volgt een vergelijkbare weg van zending als *missio Dei*. Een ander dominant motief in oecumenische kringen is *koinonía* als gemeenschap in christelijke vriendschap, aanbidding en getuigenis. Aangezien de kerk geroepen wordt tot toewijding aan solidariteit en eenheid binnen Gods schepping, wordt een oecumenische samenwerking van uitwisseling van bronnen gezien als een *koinonía* van partnerschap.

In hoofdstuk III wordt beschreven dat de mainline protestantse zending in Venezuela te maken kreeg met de kwestie hun identiteit te bepalen door het bevestigen van hun erfenis en tegelijk vooruit te kijken naar een toekomst met beloften. In dit proces ondervonden deze kerken vele obstakels, waaronder hun eigen innerlijke verdeeldheid en het historisch conflict in Latijns Amerika. Kerken en oecumenische organisaties worstelden om in eenheid als zichtbare tekenen van Gods zending en van de komst van God koninkrijk te leven. Regionale en nationale conferenties, consultaties en continentale vergaderingen bevorderden een conciliair proces dat concreet gestalte kreeg in het oprichten van de Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) in 1978. Oecumenische roeping en missiologische toewijding kwamen hier samen. Het liberale zendingsmodel was in staat om van een expansief “liberaal project”, voorgestaan door de Verenigde Staten, op te schuiven naar een holistisch, levensvatbaar en relevant protestantisme binnen de historische context van Latijns Amerika, waar de kerk in een nieuwe diaspora een voornaam theologisch motief was geworden.

Hoofdstuk IV schetst de zendingstrategie van pentecostale kerken in Latijns Amerika, waarbij hun identiteit en zending als een oecumene van de Geest worden gedefinieerd. Pentecostale kerkleiders waren actief betrokken in de bevordering van deze oecumene en in het vestigen van partnerschappen met mainline denominaties. Zending en eenheid werden als een gave van de Geest gezien die resulteerde in het bevorderen van gerechtigheid, hoop en vrede. Als plaats voor dialoog en ter bevordering van partnerschappen en strategieën voor sociale actie en evangelisatie werd de Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission (CEPLA) opgericht. Als erfgenamen van de oecumene van de Geest van Azusa Street en andere opwekkingen in de Verenigde Staten, ontving Latijns Amerika een zendingsimpuls in wat al een diverse en complexe pentecostale beweging was. Drie dominante zendingsmodellen worden besproken. Elk beantwoordde aan de sterke behoefte van de armen en onderdrukten die de meerderheid van de pentecostale kerken in Latijns Amerika vormen.

Hoofdstuk V traceert de vorming van een zendingstrategie binnen de DOC in de Verenigde Staten. Deze denominatie kwam voort uit een herstelbeweging, maar koos voor een oecumenische betrokkenheid in zending en eenheid. De DOC ontwikkelde een theologie van de zending als Gods zending en als een integrale zendingstrategie waarin het centrale thema van “bouwen aan het koninkrijk” naar boven kwam als een ecclesiologie met drie onderscheiden nadrukken: de leden van de kerk als burgers van het koninkrijk, het verwantschap van Gods volk als actieve middelaars in de bevordering van zending in eenheid voor het koninkrijk, en het koninkrijk als een gemeenschap van God in een oecumenische wereldomvattende samenwerking voor gerechtigheid en voor de verspreiding van het Evangelie. In de DOC is *missio Dei* zichtbaar

als eenheid in verscheidenheid, met identiteit en zending in een creatieve spanning tussen de kerk en het koninkrijk van God. Zending als Gods zending impliceert een consensus in de essentiële leerstellige waarden, met daarnaast de ruimte om te onderzoeken en te interpreteren.

In hoofdstuk VI komt de Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela naar voren als een autonome en autochtone beweging die kiest voor een oecumenische roeping en oecumenische relaties. De zendingstrategie integreert geestelijke vorming, leiderschapsontwikkeling, en de capaciteit om nieuwe uitdagingen en conflicten aan te kunnen gaan. Volgens deze strategie wordt de kerk door de Geest bekrachtigd om christelijke eenheid te bevorderen. De UEPV benadrukt dat de kracht van de Heilige Geest het volk toerust om te beantwoorden aan de crisis in Latijns Amerika en om de eigen innerlijke crisis in de kerk te genezen. De UEPV weet een balans te bewaren tussen haar zending als een pentecostale kerk en haar oecumenische toewijding.

Hoofdstuk VII onderzoekt de relatie tussen de DOC en de UEPV welke begon als een experiment in samenwerking en vriendschap en ontwikkelde naar een solide oecumenisch partnerschap. De twee denominaties respecteren de verschillen en verscheidenheid door het behoud van identiteit en integriteit van elke denominatie. Zij bevestigen een oecumenische toewijding en roeping om de samenwerking in zending te continueren. Het ESR model van leren en uitwisselen was een sleutelement in deze levensvatbare en positieve oecumenische relatie.

De twee denominaties hebben theologisch gereflecteerd op de praxis door het ontwikkelen van de concepten *missio Dei* en *koinonia* tot zendingstrategieën. De DOC en UEPV hebben een proces van leren-uitwisselen ontwikkeld op gebied van wederzijdse verantwoording, een nederige houding bij het omgaan met misverstanden en conflicten, en een vastberadenheid om bij elkaar te blijven en de oecumenische toewijding te verdiepen. De DOC en UEPV tonen aan dat een partnerschap gebaseerd op wederzijds respect en vertrouwen, het uitwisselen van mensen, onderwijs, financiën, geestelijke en theologische bronnen, de beste basis is voor een voortgaande partnerschap in Gods zending.

Resumen en español

Esta tesis doctoral ha sido escrita en medio de una lucha de identidad y misión. Examina las formas en que las llamadas iglesias históricas y las iglesias pentecostales tratan de cristalizar sus identidades como agentes y siervas de la misión de Dios en Latinoamérica y el Caribe, de igual forma este escritor se enrumba y dirige junto a su iglesia al servicio de Dios. Esta investigación es un esfuerzo a la misma vez académico y pastoral.

La Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana, una denominación pentecostal autónoma y la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos, una denominación protestante histórica, establecieron un compañerismo ecuménico en 1963 que se mantiene como fuerza positiva hasta el día de hoy. Los pasos iniciales en el establecimiento de esa relación fueron dados cuando el Rdo. Edmundo Jordán, pastor Discípulos de Cristo en Puerto Rico, y quien por varios años fuera misionero voluntario de las Asambleas de Dios en Venezuela, iniciara conversaciones informales y exploratorias que se concretaron en 1961 en la II Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana en Lima, Perú. Mae Yoho Ward, para ese entonces Secretaria para América Latina y el Caribe de la Sociedad Misionera Cristiana Unida, hizo los primeros acercamientos oficiales para facilitar este compañerismo ecuménico.

Por cuatro décadas estas dos denominaciones tan diferentes han compartido en un compañerismo ecuménico, particularmente en el compartir ecuménico de recursos. Las primeras dos décadas del compartir ecuménico fueron formativas, construyendo los fundamentos para una relación más sólida y permanente. La praxis concreta del compartir ecuménico de recursos entre las dos denominaciones se profundizó por una reflexión teológica y misiológica explícita. Este experimento ecuménico único en su clase amerita un análisis teológico serio, cuyo estudio contribuirá a la discusión teológica y misiológica contemporánea sobre el compartir ecuménico en la misión.

El marco teórico está basado en dos conceptos bíblico-teológicos: *missio Dei* y *koinonía*. La *missio Dei* es analizada en el contexto de las discusiones ecuménicas de las últimas cuatro décadas: las implicaciones trinitarias de la *missio Dei*, su relación con un pensamiento ecuménico y pentecostal sobre el Espíritu Santo y su papel en la misión. El concepto *koinonía* es examinado como ese compañerismo dentro del movimiento ecuménico, particularmente la aplicación práctica del compartir en compañerismo como ha sido expresado por el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias como el Compartir Ecuménico de Recursos (CER). Este escritor trazará la evolución y el uso de estos dos conceptos y su influencia en la teología ecuménica misionero, particularmente aquella sostenida por los Discípulos de Cristo. El propósito fundamental de esta disertación es demostrar los desafíos y los logros a largo plazo como un ejemplo del compartir la misión de Dios y por lo tanto elaborar un argumento sólido y consistente para ese modelo de trabajo eclesiástico.

La tesis central es que la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos y la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana han compartido por cuatro décadas en una praxis de misión a través del compañerismo ecuménico que ha venido a ser un modelo exitoso de un verdadero compañerismo mutuo. El ámbito de la disertación se enfoca en dos décadas, 1960-1980, pero también toca en las circunstancias anteriores al inicio de una relación oficial en 1963, así como a los desarrollos posteriores más allá de aquellas dos décadas. Un interés particular de la discusión se centra en la reflexión teológica que dirige y sostiene estas estrategias misioneras.

Un extenso análisis de los documentos oficiales, cartas y entrevistas proveen algunas de las preguntas claves que surgen al interior de las dos denominaciones, y que permiten que el escritor

de la tesis pueda presentar una evaluación en profundidad de este compañerismo ecuménico tan particular. 1) ¿Cómo dos denominaciones articulan y reflexionan teológicamente sobre su praxis? 2) ¿Cuáles son los motivos teológicos predominantes que sustentan sus teologías de misión? 3) ¿Cuáles modelos de misión informan e influyen sus teologías de misión? 4) ¿Tienen estas dos denominaciones una comprensión teológica común sobre su compartir en la misión de Dios? 5) ¿Cómo desarrollan un proceso de compartir y aprendizaje? 6) ¿Cuáles son algunos asuntos y desafíos para ambas denominaciones? 7) ¿Cómo continúan hacia adelante en misión? 8) ¿Cómo pueden mejorar y profundizar un compañerismo ecuménico creciente a futuro?

La relación entre estas dos denominaciones tan diferentes es un experimento único en el compartir ecuménico. Esta disertación es el primer intento de analizar y evaluar estas relaciones.

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en América Latina, el Caribe y los Estados Unidos. Venezuela es el país que ha recibido mayor atención por el enfoque en la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana y su relación con la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos. El autor ha viajado extensamente por todo el territorio venezolano en los últimas tres décadas.

El compromiso activo del escritor como misionero por 34 años en México, Costa, Chile, Venezuela y los Estados Unidos, constituye una posición privilegiada que ha ayudado inmensamente en este proyecto de investigación. El haber enseñado cursos sobre pentecostalismo en Latinoamérica y el Caribe en el Seminario Teológico Cristiano de Indianápolis, Indiana, la Escuela Luterana de Teología en Chicago, y el Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano (hoy Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana) en Costa Rica le ha dado a este investigador la oportunidad única de probar, ponderar, refinar y rehacer el contenido de la disertación en un diálogo continuo con estudiantes y colegas. El papel del autor como predicador y conferenciante alrededor del mundo, particularmente Latinoamérica y el Caribe, y los Estados Unidos, ha sido una ganancia para esta investigación. El escritor de esta disertación ha sustentado que la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos y Canadá y la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana han compartido por cuatro décadas en un proceso que comenzó como un experimento en cooperación y ha llegado a ser un exitoso compañerismo ecuménico basado en la igualdad, la mutualidad y el respeto.

En el capítulo I el autor plantea el marco teórico de la disertación, delineó la tesis como 40 años exitosos de compañerismo ecuménico entre los Discípulos de Cristo y la UEPV, e introdujo los conceptos *missio Dei* y *koinonía*. Demostró la importancia que tiene la búsqueda de identidad y misión como un factor definitivo para la identidad denominacional y a la misma vez como el fundamento de la relaciones entre ambas denominaciones. El capítulo I describe dos modelos de estrategia misionera (Iglesia histórica protestante y pentecostal), analizó la estrategia misionera conjunta en el compartir y destacó el Compartir Ecuménico de Recursos como modelo. Se esbozan la metodología, principios y delimitaciones del presente estudio, incluyendo el contexto y un estudio histórico-crítico de las causas y raíces profundas detrás del carácter de las iglesias a través de la participación/observación, entrevistas, cartas y documentos. Ocho preguntas claves han sido formuladas en la introducción y serán abordadas a medida que los capítulos se desarrollen.

Los elementos teológicos de la misión son planteados en el capítulo II, a través del examen de diferentes tradiciones y diversas posiciones teológicas, mientras se busca un consenso sobre el concepto clave *missio Dei* como la actividad misionera de Dios y enfatizando las

dimensiones integradora, comprensiva e inclusiva de la misión. El proceso conciliar demuestra una inclinación similar al afirmar la misión como misión de Dios. Otro motivo predominante en círculos ecuménicos ha sido la *koinonía* como comunión en la fraternidad cristiana, el culto y el testimonio servicial. Este capítulo ha demostrado que si la Iglesia es llamada al compromiso en la solidaridad y la unidad a la misma vez que promueve el cuidado de la creación de Dios, *koinonía* como compartir es vista como cooperación ecuménica en el compartir concreto de recursos. Una teóloga feminista ha sido citada a los efectos de que el verdadero compartir requiere la construcción de mejores relaciones para el futuro de toda la humanidad. La Iglesia Unida de Cristo en Las Filipinas y el Proceso de San Pablo fueron citados como ofreciendo un testimonio común en deshacerse de la herencia colonial y moverse hacia al auto-determinación, auto-sostén y la dignidad.

El propósito principal del capítulo III es subrayar que las misiones de las iglesias históricas protestantes en Latinoamérica, y Venezuela en particular, han enfrentado el desafío crucial de determinar sus identidades, afirmando su herencia mientras avizoran hacia un futuro promisorio. Estas iglesias han confrontado muchos obstáculos en este proceso, incluyendo sus propias divisiones internas así como también el conflicto histórico en Latinoamérica y el Caribe. Las iglesias y los organismos ecuménicos luchan por vivir en misión y unidad como expresión visible en compartir la misión de Dios y la llegada de su reinado. Conferencias nacionales y regionales, consultas, y asambleas continentales promovieron un proceso conciliar que tomó cuerpo en la fundación del *CLAI* en 1978. En ese proyecto la vocación ecuménica y el compromiso misional estaban entrelazados. El proyecto misionero liberal fue capaz de resarcirse de la influencia del proyecto liberal promovido por Estados Unidos y comenzar a moverse hacia un proyecto de protestantismo más integrador, viable y relevante dentro de las condiciones históricas de América Latina y el Caribe, donde la iglesia en una nueva diáspora era el motivo teológico predominante.

El capítulo IV trata de delinear la estrategia misionera de las iglesias pentecostales en Latinoamérica y el Caribe, definiendo su identidad y misión como un ecumenismo del Espíritu. Líderes pentecostales han estado muy activos promoviendo este estilo de ecumenismo y en el establecimiento de compañerismos en misión con iglesias históricas. Misión y unidad es vislumbrada como un regalo del Espíritu que trae como resultado la promoción de la justicia, esperanza y paz. *CEPLA* se estableció como una instancia para el diálogo y un instrumento para ampliar el compartir y alentar estrategias para la acción social y la evangelización. Como herederos del ecumenismo del Espíritu que sopló en el movimiento de la calle Azusa en Los Ángeles, California y otros avivamientos y movimientos espirituales en los Estados Unidos, Latinoamérica y el Caribe recibió la inspiración y el impulso misionero en lo que ya era un movimiento pentecostal complejo y diverso. Los tres modelos predominantes apuntados eran el modelo de expansión misionera relacionado primordialmente con las Juntas Misioneras en Estados Unidos, un neopentecostalismo de sanidad divina y un movimiento autóctono y autónomo. Los tres modelos de misión eran respuesta a las necesidades apremiantes de las clases pobres y oprimidas de la que forma parte la mayoría de los miembros de las iglesias pentecostales latinoamericanas y caribeñas.

En el capítulo V se traza la configuración de una estrategia para la misión en la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos. Esta denominación creció como parte del movimiento de restauración en el siglo XIX, pero optó por un compromiso ecuménico en la promoción de la misión y la unidad. Los Discípulos de Cristo elaboraron una teología de la

misión como misión de Dios y una estrategia integral en la cual el tema central de “la construcción del reino” emerge como una eclesiología con tres énfasis distintivos: los miembros de la iglesia como ciudadanos del Reino, el reinado del pueblo de Dios como agentes activos en la promoción de la misión en la unidad a favor del Reino y el Reino como la comunión con Dios en la cooperación ecuménica global por la justicia y diseminación del Evangelio. En la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos la *missio Dei* se expresó como unidad en la diversidad, con la identidad y misión en una tensión creativa entre la iglesia y el reino de Dios. La misión como misión de Dios implica retener la libertad para examinar e interpretar y a la misma vez aceptar el consenso en principios doctrinales esenciales.

El capítulo VI rastrea como la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana deviene un movimiento autóctono y autónomo que opta por la vocación ecuménica y el compartir ecuménico. Su estrategia para la misión ha integrado la formación espiritual, el desarrollo de liderato, y la capacidad para enfrentar nuevos desafíos y conflictos. De acuerdo con esta estrategia la iglesia es apoderada por el Espíritu para promover y testificar la unidad cristiana. La UEPV fue una fuerza pionera en reclamar el ideal bolivariano de la patria grande. Enfatizó que el poder del Espíritu Santo equipa al pueblo para que pueda responder a la crisis en Latinoamérica y el Caribe y sanar las crisis internas en la propia UEPV, y de igual manera impartiendo la visión para discernir los signos de los tiempos y por lo tanto servir mejor al pueblo de Dios. A la UEPV se le fue haciendo evidente que al afirmar su visión podía mantener un balance entre su misión y su compromiso ecuménico como una iglesia pentecostal.

El capítulo VII delinea la relación entre los Discípulos de Cristo y la UEPV empezó como un experimento en cooperación y fraternidad mutua y creció hasta ser un compartir ecuménico sólido. Las dos denominaciones continuaron honrando sus diferencias y diversidad manteniendo la identidad e integridad de cada denominación. Ellas reafirmaron un compromiso y vocación ecuménica al proseguir trabajando juntas en misión. El modelo de aprender/compartir en el Compartir Ecuménico de Recursos fue uno de los elementos cruciales en este relacionamiento ecuménico tan vital y positivo. Ambas denominaciones han sido influidas por las discusiones ecuménicas de la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

Cada denominación puede mejorar en profundizar este compartir ecuménico explorando nuevas estrategias para la misión. La Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos se puede beneficiar del fervor evangelístico y la experiencia de la UEPV. La UEPV puede aprender de las experiencias en ministerios de compasión, solidaridad y acción social adquiridas por los Discípulos de Cristo durante más de 150 años de existencia. La experiencia acumulada de estos 40 años de compartir ecuménico conforma un sólido fundamento para explorar nuevas aventuras en misión.

Un elemento que hace de este compartir un modelo exitoso es la inmersión en experiencias concretas y los resultados positivos, aún en tiempos difíciles. En primer lugar, el compartir mutuo requiere que decir la verdad mutuamente (Efesios 4:25b) para mantener el respeto y la confianza mutuas. Estas dos denominaciones han cultivado este principio en varios momentos críticos. Desde los contactos iniciales de 1959 a 1972 cuando el experimento en cooperación se estableció, se evitaron las falsas expectativas, cultivando el diálogo honesto mientras se aprendía y compartía mutuamente. El segundo período crucial entre 1972-1980 consolidó el compartir ecuménico a través del personal misionero asignado para proyectos específicos, proveyendo fondos económicos y compartiendo peritos en disciplinas específicas. El tercer momento crucial entre 1981 y 1983, cuando la UEPV sufrió un conflicto interno serio que

casi destruyó la organización. En la XXVII Convención de la *UEPV*, agosto 25-28, 1983 la División de Ministerios de Ultramar se mantuvo firme y solidaria en la relación haciéndose presente a través del Rdo. David Vargas, Secretario para América Latina y el Caribe. El resultado fue que al final de dicha Convención ambas iglesias reafirmaron su intención de permanecer unidas en misión. Para solidificar ese compromiso el Rdo. Gamaliel Lugo, Obispo-Presidente de la *UEPV* fue invitado como delegado internacional a la Asamblea General de la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en Des Moines, Iowa, octubre de 1985.

El cuarto momento crucial se dio en la consulta, “Compartiendo la esperanza: un Ecumenismo del Espíritu en Indianápolis, en 1997. Esta consulta proveyó el lugar y la oportunidad para que la *UEPV* y otras denominaciones pentecostales que comparten una relación ecuménica se dijeran la verdad en amor una vez más. Los participantes confirmaron que muchas debilidades, obstáculos y dilemas ameritan ser abordados por ambas partes. A pesar de estos desafíos los participantes se comprometieron a mantenerse unidos en misión, enfrentando los desafíos de estos tiempos.

Un elemento que ha contribuido al éxito de este compartir mutuo es que compartir en la misión de Dios requiere una apertura para corregir errores, mejorar las relaciones y tomar opciones. Entre 1983 y el 2004 el Comité Ejecutivo de la *UEPV* promovió un diálogo abierto con las congregaciones que por diversas discrepancias abandonaron la Unión. Muchas congregaciones regresaron, otras han mantenido una relación cordial y una comunicación fluida, compartiendo en muchas tareas de la misión. Ese mismo Comité Ejecutivo condujo un proceso de discernimiento del compromiso ecuménico entre 1984 y 1986 que finalmente se plasmó en una declaración pública en la XXX Convención, agosto de 1986, en la Iglesia Hosanna de Guanare, Estado Portuguesa. Se contó con la presencia de líderes presbiterianos, metodistas y luteranos durante esa Convención. El siguiente año 1987, en la XXXI Convención en la “Comunidad El Triunfo” de Valencia, la *UEPV* declaró públicamente su vocación ecuménica, la opción por los pobres y su identidad pentecostal. Todo este proceso deja claro que la *UEPV* desea continuar en el compartir ecuménico con la Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en los Estados Unidos y con el movimiento ecuménico latinoamericano y mundial.

Estas dos iglesias se han movido adelante en la misión hacia la igualdad y la justicia y han comprobado que el compartir basado en el respeto mutuo y la confianza a través de los recursos económicos, educativos, espirituales, humanos teológicos y misiológicos, es el mejor fundamento para compartir en la misión de Dios.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sharing in God's Mission: An Ecumenical Partnership

Latin American and Caribbean Protestantism has struggled with one overriding issue during the past four decades: the multi-faceted relationship between identity and mission, primarily as manifested in the role of the churches as autonomous-autochthonous bodies within the Church universal.¹ In academic circles this issue has been connected to and analyzed within the larger topics of “religion and postmodernity” and “identity and modernity” as church leaders and theologians examine the rapid growth of the churches, their active presence in social life and politics, and the role that Protestants are playing and will play in Latin American and Caribbean society.² Jorge Larraín, expresses the importance of the “religious factor” in the modern search for identity in Latin America: “finally, religion is a crucial dimension of Latin American identity.”³ He examines the active role of Christianity in all its manifestations as a major and vital force in the formation of a Latin American cultural identity.⁴ Larraín concludes by saying: “[The] impact of Christian religions, particularly Catholicism and Pentecostalism, upon Latin American culture is still very important.”⁵

In turn, Christian denominations in Latin America also reflect the local culture and are shaped by the interaction between the various religious groups. Swiss theologian and missiologist Walter Hollenweger, who is rooted in the pentecostal faith, observes several root influences within the pentecostal movement in Latin America: a strong oral tradition, an ecumenical frame of reference, a Catholic religious culture, evangelical pacifism, diversity, indigenization, a close relationship between theology and ethics, and a need for autonomy.⁶ The resulting search for identity (cultural, racial, and religious) is closely related to *la memoria histórica* (historic memory)--a capacity to examine the roots, development, and destiny of a collective people.⁷

1 Valdir Steurnagel, *Obediencia misionera y práctica histórica*, trans. from Portuguese by Néstor Saavedra (Buenos Aires-Grand Rapids, MI: Nueva Creación-W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 13-29, 153-179.

2 Elio Masferrer Kan et al., *Religión y postmodernidad: Las recientes alteraciones del campo religioso* (Quito, Ecuador: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2002). This is a solid short book dealing with the new religious movements (pentecostals and Neo-pentecostals) and how they are altering the religious landscape within the market economy.

3 Jorge Larraín, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 201.

4 Ibid., 201-207.

5 Ibid., 206.

6 Walter Hollenweger, “From Azusa to the Toronto Phenomenon: Historical Roots of the Pentecostal Movement,” *Concilium* 1996/3, ed. Jurgen Moltmann and Karl-Josef Kuschel, 3-14.

7 Eduardo Hoornaert, Belgian-Brazilian historian and missiologist, has written three books on this “historic memory,” its roots in Christian history and tradition, and its importance in the construction of a religious identity in Latin America: *La memoria del pueblo cristiano*

How shall we understand this *memoria histórica*? It is that capacity to integrate the past without being trapped or paralyzed by it. Holding a historical commitment in the present is a way of living at the crossroads between the influences of the past and the visions and dreams for the future. Living this crucial moment here and now becomes necessary. For both mainline and pentecostal denominations the emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit means the recuperation and appropriation of a vital force and presence in history. The Holy Spirit has been and is always calling and challenging, signaling toward a better future, and showing the way in order to produce transformation and change and the irruption of new liberating forces. The Holy Spirit, within the divine economy and internal relationship of the Trinity, opens new possibilities. In Jesus Christ's life, ministry, death, and resurrection, God's mission is fulfilled in history. This theological conviction affirms history as the locus for discerning God's mission in the world and gaining a "passion for the kingdom" to transform the existing realities of sin and injustice.⁸

This dissertation has been written amidst this struggle for identity and mission. It examines the ways in which Mainline Protestants and Pentecostals are trying to crystallize their identities as agents and servants of God's mission in Latin America and the Caribbean as its writer strives to shape himself and his church in service to God. It is both an academic and pastoral quest for the writer of this investigation.

Mission and Unity in a Globalized World

Mission and unity have had an intricately interconnected relationship during the past two centuries. One cannot understand the history and development of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century without closely considering how mission and unity have combined in creative tension to shape present conditions. The significance of this dialectical tension is crucial for any theology of mission and for the emergence of a new "missionary paradigm" toward the future.⁹

Both the ecumenical movement in all its expressions and the missionary movement in all its models and structures are challenged to understand and embrace the contemporary crisis and to search for new ways to respond to a globalized world in religious, social, political, moral, cultural, racial, and sexual manifestations. There is no doubt that a paradigm shift is taking place in the scientific, technological, and philosophical rationales from that which presided over the modern period.¹⁰

Vanderbilt University's Divinity School professor of systematic theology Peter C. Hodgson explains the concept of "paradigm shift" as follows:

(Madrid, Spain: *Ediciones Paulinas*, 1986); *El movimiento de Jesús* (Mexico City: *Editorial Dabar*, 1996); and *Cristianos de la tercera generación (100-130)* (Mexico City: *Ediciones Dabar*, 1999).

8 Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 122-208.

9 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 463-467.

10 Márcio Fabri Dos Anjos, ed., *Teología y nuevos paradigmas*, trans. José Antonio Aguirre (Bilbao, Spain: *Ediciones Mensajero*, 1999), 9-67, 195-209.

A paradigm is an example, model, or pattern. As the Greek etymology of the word suggests, an example (*deigma*), is set up alongside (*para*) something to show what it is; it is a model on a microcosmic scale (a scale model) of a large, complex, dispersed, difficult-to-grasp state of affairs. In his study of the history of science, Thomas Kuhn uses the term paradigm to refer to exemplary formulations of scientific theory, such as Copernicus' explanation of planetary motion and Newton's theory of mechanics. He describes major transitions in scientific theories as *paradigm shifts* (emphasis mine).¹¹

A paradigm shift has an important effect upon cultures, which are the dynamic realities in which religious beliefs play a central role. This effect opens the possibility for theological reflection. Hodgson demonstrates that this transitional shifting is both an opportunity and a risk:

The new cultural paradigm calls for a new theological paradigm, a revisioning of the entire theological agenda, including questions of method, God, history, human being, ecclesiology, eschatology, and religious pluralism.¹²

This transitional period announces the irruption of a new and promising era of history—a moment that is discernible and yet awaits a future manifestation in all its fullness.

A paradigm shift is on the one hand a real break with the previous frame of reference, but a new paradigm is only seen to be reliable if it can provide explanation and confirmation, within newly defined boundaries, of the relative perceptions of truth contained in the old paradigm.¹³

In the midst of the uncertainty, confusion, and contradictions of these times, churches and ecumenical organizations live in a creative/dialectical tension typical of transitional moments in history.¹⁴

The late South African missiologist David Bosch saw the implications of this paradigm shift as a unique opportunity for developing a theology of mission that is both critical and transforming.¹⁵ Hans Kung, Swiss Catholic theologian, stresses the importance in these transitional times of developing an ecumenical theology “to serve the mission of the church in this society. For there is no ecumenical church without an ecumenical theology.”¹⁶

Ecumenism is best understood within its local and global contexts. Today globalization is a crucial element of the context in which mission takes place. Robert Streiter, a leading voice on globalization and its impact on theology and mission, highlights the fundamental nature of globalization in the world today:

¹¹ Peter C. Hodgson, *Revisioning the Church: Ecclesial Freedom in the New Paradigm* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 11-12.

¹² Ibid., 18.

¹³ Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* trans. Tony Coates (Geneva: WCC Publications 1991), 77.

¹⁴ For a Latin American perspective on this issue, see Julio de Santa Ana, “*Ecumenismo y nuevas llaves de lectura*,” *Revista de cultura teológica II*, 6 (January/March 1994), 73-85.

¹⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 185-187, 210-213, 264-267.

¹⁶ Hans Kung, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 204.

Globalization becomes a full reality when we realize that we are inevitably part of a worldwide flow of information, technology, capital and goods—a flow over which no single nation has effective control any more.¹⁷

And contextualization is considered as follows:

Contextualization becomes, therefore, a means to hold up what is noble and immensely human and humane in a local culture against the onslaughts of forces—both historical and contemporary—that seek to undermine the dignity of the local culture.¹⁸

The concept of *contextualization* or *contextualizing* was introduced into ecumenical circles in 1972 by Shoki Coe, Taiwanese theologian and Director of the Theological Education Fund. He defined contextualization as an inclusive phenomenon that expands on concepts such as indigenization practiced by Evangelicals and enculturation introduced by Catholic missiologists. Coe also pointed out that contextualization encompasses not only purely religious issues but also the technological-scientific, secular struggles for human justice and the integrity of creation.¹⁹

Theology of mission is better understood today as *missio Dei*, which requires a reciprocal relationship of mutuality in an ecumenical understanding of mission that affirms religious, racial, gender, sexual, and cultural diversities as creative elements of the whole. The churches of both hemispheres, both north and south, become, in mutual accountability, real partners in mission and members of a worldwide community. Sharing in that community is a key element of proclaiming and witnessing God's mission in the world today.

The Dissertation Theme and Its Importance

The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV), an autonomous pentecostal denomination, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, a Mainline Protestant denomination, established an ecumenical partnership in 1963 that remains a positive force today. The initial steps in establishing this relationship began when Rev. Edmundo Jordán, Puerto Rican Disciples pastor and Puerto Rican Assemblies of God missionary to Venezuela, initiated informal and exploratory conversations that came to fruition in the 1961 II Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA) in Lima, Peru. Mae Yoho Ward, then Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS), made the initial contacts at CELA to enable this ecumenical partnership.

For four decades these two very different denominations have shared in an ecumenical partnership, primarily manifested in the sharing of ecumenical resources. The first two decades of ecumenical partnership were formative, establishing the foundations for a more permanent and solid relationship. The concrete praxis of sharing ecumenical resources between these two denominations was deepened by an explicit theological and missiological reflection. This unique ecumenical experiment deserves serious theological analysis, the study of which will contribute

17 Robert Streiter, "Contextualization from a World Perspective," *Association of Theological Schools Theological Education Supplement*, I (1993), 63-86.

18 Ibid., 68.

19 Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 21-22.

to contemporary theological and missiological discussions on ecumenical sharing in mission.

The Main Objectives

The main objectives of this dissertation are:

1. The theoretical framework is based on two biblical-theological and missiological concepts: *missio Dei* and *koinonia*. *Missio Dei* is analyzed in the context of the ecumenical discussions of the past four decades: its Trinitarian implications of *missio Dei*, its relationship to an ecumenical and pentecostal thinking on the Holy Spirit, and its role in mission. The *koinonia* concept is examined as a partnership within the ecumenical movement, particularly the practical application of sharing in partnership as expressed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) as the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR). The writer traces the evolution and usage of these two concepts and their influence on ecumenical missionary theology, particularly that of the Disciples of Christ. The main objective of this dissertation is to show both the challenges and long-term success of one example of sharing in God's mission and thus to elaborate a consistent and solid argument for that model of church work.
2. Two historical models of mission under gird mission strategy: the Mainline-Protestant model, and the pentecostal model. This dissertation traces those two models through the history of mission in Latin America.
3. This dissertation will provide an analysis of the strategies for mission developed by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, known as the CC(DoC), and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV). The concept of "kingdom building" is the predominant motive among the Disciples of Christ, whereas the "liberating Spirit" is the primary impetus for the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela.
4. The Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR) concept is applied in order to illuminate and interpret this experiment in ecumenical sharing between the two denominations that includes missionary personnel, financial support, educational projects, field work in construction projects, and the exchange of delegations.

The Thesis

The main thesis of this dissertation is that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela have shared for four decades in a praxis of mission through ecumenical partnership that has become a successful model of a true and mutual partnership. The scope of this dissertation focuses on two decades, 1960-1980, but it also touches on circumstances before the official relationship started in 1963 as well as further developments beyond these two decades. A main focus of this discussion is the theological reflection that directs and sustains these mission strategies. An extensive analysis of official documents, letters, and interviews provides some of the key questions arising within these two denominations that allow the writer to present an in-depth evaluation of this particular partnership. 1) How do the two denominations articulate and reflect theologically on their praxis? 2) What are the predominant theological motives that under gird their theologies of mission? 3) Which models of mission inform and influence their theologies of mission? 4) Do these denominations hold a common theological understanding of their sharing in God's mission? 5) How do they develop a sharing/learning process? 6) What are some issues and challenges for both denominations? 6) How do they move forward in mission? 8) How can they

continue to improve and deepen an ongoing ecumenical partnership?

The relationship between these two very different denominations is a unique experiment in ecumenical sharing. This dissertation is the first attempt to analyze and evaluate this relationship. A single 1968 Master of Divinity thesis (Lexington Theological Seminary) exists relating to an aspect of this topic: *Faith Churches of Venezuela: An Historical Survey* by Rev. Juan Marcos Rivera. It is a valuable source of information about mission work in Venezuela, but it does not examine or assess the relationship between the Disciples of Christ and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union. In addition, Rivera's study covers exclusively Venezuelan mission in all denominations and in non-denominational settings, including the so-called "Faith Missions" and the predominant conservative theology in that country. Another limitation of Rivera's thesis is that it is exclusively his own personal testimony as the first missionary appointed to establish the experiment in ecumenical sharing between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela.

Examining the Issues

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. The first chapter contains an introduction of the main objectives, procedures, guiding principles, methodology, research context, and limits of the study. Theoretical framework is expounded in chapter two, presenting and outlining the biblical and theological foundations for the use of partnership as a key hermeneutical principle, particularly highlighting the key concepts of *missio Dei* and *koinonia* within the conciliar process of the twentieth century as discussed by the World Council of Churches in meetings and conferences. Specific theologians have been selected to demonstrate the importance, influence, and complexity of these concepts. The concept of sharing in partnership is also examined and compared within two other ecumenical experiments in the Philippines and Latin America. The third chapter sets forth the Mainline Protestant model of mission in search of identity and its development in Latin America and the Caribbean, while the fourth chapter examines the pentecostal model. The fifth and sixth chapters, respectively, trace the kingdom building mission strategies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Venezuelan Evangelical Pentecostal Union's "Liberating Spirit" approach to mission. Chapter seven applies the theoretical framework set up in chapter two regarding the partnership relationship, as expressed by these two denominations in the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR) and presents an analysis and evaluation of the partnership and the various projects it developed during the partnership's first two decades. The eighth chapter provides some conclusions and reveals some challenges and issues facing both denominations as these denominations move forward in mission.

History and Mission: Methodological Perspectives

In order to accomplish the task of analyzing the context of mission in Latin America and the Caribbean and evaluating its effect, it is necessary to examine the historical conditions in which this mission occurs. A historical interpretation of the root causes of present realities and conditions is needed. Historical conditions shape mission, and "mission creates history" in a dialectical tension.²⁰ No one can avoid the complexities of this tension. Also essential to this

20 José Míguez Bonino, "How Does United States Presence Help, Hinder, or

analysis and evaluation is a historical understanding of mission and of how mission is conceived by the various churches. José Míguez Bonino, Methodist theologian from Argentina, offers important insight into the dilemma that Protestant churches face in Latin America. He believes that Protestantism will only escape its crisis of identity and mission by recapturing the subversive role it had in the past, because today we face a radically different situation (translation mine).²¹ He also states, “It is no more a question of *what will happen to Christianity in Latin America* but *what will Christianity do here?*” (emphasis mine).²² This dilemma is the crisis and challenge facing all Protestant traditions in Latin America and the Caribbean today.²³

Methodological principles

This dissertation embodies the following principles learned and shared by the writer as an active participant in CEHILA (Latin American Commission on Church History) and EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians).²⁴ The close interconnection between history and mission must be examined from an ecumenical perspective. The following guiding principles are useful as hermeneutical and methodological tools to clarify concepts, detect problems, and raise relevant issues to be pondered and considered:

An Ecumenical History of Mission:

1. arises from the perspective of the “hidden stories” and the “invisible and voiceless situation” of the oppressed people in the Third World;
2. takes seriously a global perspective and ecumenical solidarity that embrace both the local and global dimensions;
3. stresses the pertinence of a search for identity and mission in diverse and plural cultural contexts;
4. affirms the diverse expressions of liturgy and worship, oral traditions, spiritual affections, and charismatic manifestations;
5. takes seriously the commitment to affirm a sharing in God’s mission (*missio Dei*) and a communion (*koinonia*) toward solidarity in the coming of God’s reign;
6. envisions a future of hope for the churches in the north and the south, moving forward in mission, and sharing in partnership.²⁵

Compromise Christian Mission in Latin America?” *Review and Expositor* 74 (spring 1977), 173-174.

21 José Míguez Bonino, “*Historia y misión.*” in *Raíces de la teología latinoamericana*, ed. Pablo Richard (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI-CEBILA, 1985), 249.

22 José Míguez Bonino, “The Conditions and Prospects of Christianity,” in *New Face of the Church in Latin America*, ed. Guillermo Cook (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 1994), 266.

23 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *El protestantismo latinoamericano: Entre la crisis y el desafío* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1981).

24 The writer of this dissertation was Protestant Coordinator of CEHILA (1978-1984) and General Secretary-Treasurer of EATWOT (1992-1996).

25 Timothy J. Wengert and Charles W. Brockwell, Jr., ed., *Telling the Churches’ Stories: Ecumenical Perspectives on Writing Christian History* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 3-36.

Delimitations of this study

Geographical

The research presented in this dissertation was conducted in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. Venezuela is the country that has received more attention because of the focus on the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in relationship with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States. Extensive travel has taken the writer all over the Venezuelan territory in the past three decades.

Ecclesiological

A second delimitation is the concentration on two Protestant traditions: mainline in the United States, and pentecostal in Venezuela. The approach has been to contextualize life and ministry in each country while trying to visualize a larger picture within the global mission of the church and the contemporary ecumenical movement.

Research Methodology

Historical-missiological-theological perspectives of mission are presented in this dissertation to show the dimensions of an “emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm.”²⁶ An inductive method is applied to information gleaned from documents, reports, memoranda, correspondence of missionaries and prominent leaders, articles, and books. Some of these source materials reside in archives at the headquarters of the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis, Indiana, and among the archives and confidential documents of the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in Maracaibo and Barquisimeto, Venezuela. All of these archives were used with the official endorsement and permission of the corresponding officials.

Participation-Observation

The writer’s active involvement as a missionary for thirty-years in Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile, Venezuela, and the United States is a privileged position that has helped immensely in this research project. The teaching of courses on pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, and the Latin American Biblical Seminary (now Latin American Biblical University) in Costa Rica has given to this researcher a unique opportunity to test, ponder, refine, and reshape the dissertation’s content in an ongoing dialogue with students and colleagues. The author’s role as a preacher and lecturer all over the world, particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States, has been an asset to this research.

Interviews

The writer has conducted many interviews over a period of three decades, from which some were carefully selected for inclusion in this dissertation. Recorded conversations and hand-written notes, as well as transcriptions of conversations and interviews written by the interviewer, were edited for inclusion as well. A few interviews were hand-written by the

²⁶ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 368-510.

persons interviewed and sent to the writer or photocopied from the archives.

CHAPTER II

SHARING IN GOD'S MISSION: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The first main concern in this chapter is to identify working theological definitions of mission as *missio Dei* in the discussions of influential theologians and relevant international conferences organized by the International Missionary Council (IMC) and later by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The second element of this chapter is an analysis of *koinonia* as a sharing in partnership by tracing its development in the ecumenical thinking of certain key theologians and ecumenical conferences. Third, insights on sharing in partnership are studied from the perspective of several ecumenical thinkers and a feminist theologian. Fourth, two experiments in partnership, one in the Philippines and one in Latin America, are examined.

One key issue in each of these discussions is how *koinonia* is transformed into partnership and solidarity. The other issue is the emergence of a need for a more coherent and holistic theology of mission, incorporating the mission of the Triune God as a necessary corrective and balance. The main objective of these analyses is to develop a hermeneutical tool to facilitate an understanding of how these two denominations--Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela--were influenced by ecumenical thinking: how they shaped their strategy for mission and how they shared in ecumenical partnership. Both biblical and theological perspectives are stressed.

Mission as Missio Dei

The concept of *missio Dei* was coined in ecumenical circles in the 1950s. The expression itself had a long history in theology, but it reappeared within the International Missionary Council (IMC) as that organization tried to relate ecumenism and mission. In both theological and ecumenical contexts, *missio Dei* referred to "the activities within the Trinity itself [that] are expressed in God's 'outside' mission: the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Spirit for the redemption of humanity."²⁷ The emphasis of *missio Dei* is on a divine economy that distributes "unity into Trinity" for the salvation of the world. Its ecumenical discussion centers on the tension between the Church and mission and "its obligation to the world."²⁸

The crucial question of the role of the Church in the world challenged the ecumenical movement to develop a relevant missionary theology for twentieth century missionary witness. George F. Vicedom, in his classical work *The Mission of God*, insists that God is the subject of mission, not the Church, "since it is always the Triune God who acts, who makes believers members of His kingdom. Even the Church is only an instrument in the hands of God."²⁹ God is the initiator and promoter of salvation; the Church is actively engaged in promoting God's

27 Tom Stransky, "Misión Dei," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicolas Lossky et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 688.

28 Ibid.

29 George F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, trans. Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 4-5.

saving grace to the world, extending His Lordship and proclaiming God's kingdom.³⁰ The late Orlando Costas sees *missio Dei* as God's liberating news to the world and the Holy Spirit's action bringing the world back to God through Jesus Christ. The presence of the Triune God is witnessed in a contextual evangelization "everywhere and at all times in the presence of the total activity of the Triune God."³¹

This general definition needs more concrete analysis, because the *missio Dei* concept has been used and applied by different theologians from a variety of theological positions and perspectives. We will examine a selection of prominent theologians and their decisive influence within the ecumenical movement. Their influence on the conciliar process will then be analyzed as the key conferences are presented and studied.

Karl Barth, Swiss theologian, was by any standards the most influential theologian of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century, particularly during the formation and constitution of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). Barth's impact on mission theology and his radical criticism of liberal theology and its optimism provided the fundamental elements for discussion among ecumenical theologians on both the role of the Church in mission and an ecumenical theology of mission.

Barth's commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans* in 1919 was a catalyst that ignited a serious discussion on the Triune God and Mission as *missio Dei*. God is the subject of mission. The church needs to understand that her mission is to respond actively to God's mission as manifested in the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ as reconciler for the world in the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the only truth that really liberates from sin. Barth took a radical position by making a distinction between "religion" and faith. Religion cannot really save from a broken relationship with God. The proclamation of the Good News is the invitation to accept by God's grace a status that no religion can offer.

Barth was interested in the role of the ecumenical movement both as a witness to God's mission and as a promoter of unity. The Church as humble servant needs to live not by power but as a witness to the Gospel in the world. Barth challenged the ecumenical movement to elaborate a solid theology of mission in order to avoid confusion with a "natural theology" that did not put a clear emphasis on God's revelation in Jesus Christ. He also warned the ecumenical movement against the failure to be relevant in the midst of a world in desperation and turmoil, a world in crisis.³² John Thompson sums up this Barthian perspective as follows:

The ultimate basis of mission is the triune God—the Father who created the world and sent His Son by the Holy Spirit to be our salvation. The proximate basis of mission is the redemption of the Spirit by His life, death and resurrection, and the immediate power of mission is the Holy Spirit. It is, in Trinitarian terms, a *missio Dei*.³³

30 Ibid., 12-44.

31 Orlando E. Costas, *Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 71-83.

32 Horst Rzepkowski, *Diccionario de misionología*, trans. Víctor Abelardo de Lapera Montoya (Navarra, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1997), 60-61. See also Justo L. González, *Historia del pensamiento cristiano*, vol. iii (Miami, FL: Editorial Caribe, 1993), 445-453.

33 John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 72.

David Bosch of South Africa developed this concept of *missio Dei* stressing the following aspects:

It has its origin in God. God is a missionary God, a God who crosses frontiers toward the world. In creation God was already the God of mission, with his word and Spirit as 'Missionaries' (see Gen. 1.2-3).³⁴

Jesus Christ is the incarnate word to the world, manifested through the Spirit in Pentecost. The Triune God is the subject of mission, manifested in the world through God's love. The Christological basis for mission is the fact that Jesus' incarnation, cross, and resurrection "compel us to take *history* seriously and thus also mission as historical involvement in this world."³⁵ Bosch then emphasizes the place and presence of the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit does not replace Christ: his presence is the presence of Christ."³⁶ The Church as mission shares in faith to the world the hope manifested in the signs of the kingdom, proclaiming a new order, revealed dramatically in the cross: "Mission is the Church-crossing-frontiers-in-the-form-of-a-servant."³⁷

José Míguez Bonino wrote *Faces of Protestantism in Latin America*, in which he insists on the importance of theological reflection.³⁸ He proposes a Trinitarian perspective to deepen the Christological, soteriological, and pneumatological comprehension of faith. The doctrine of the Trinity becomes a hermeneutical criterion in a formulation of the church's theology. God as mystery is conceived in terms of freedom, otherness, and transcendence, but through God's revelation and in covenant with God's people God becomes incarnate in history.³⁹ God as Trinity is in permanent conversation and relationship, in communion of love, and in unity of purpose and action internally, thus becoming a model for human relationships.⁴⁰

One of the key issues in Latin American Protestantism has to do with what José Míguez Bonino calls a "Christological reductionism."⁴¹ In most of the popular piety of Protestant churches in the region, Christ is personal Savior and individual Healer but does not assume the cultural, social, and historical dimensions of an incarnate logos. A Trinitarian perspective could be a corrective to a quasi-Gnostic Christology that has nothing to do with the conflicts and realities of the world. There is also a distortion, primarily in pentecostal circles, of a pneumatology that lives a "Christ in the Spirit" experience but lacks a theological reflection on

34 David Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980), 239.

35 Ibid., 241.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 247-248. Bosch expands on these concepts in his now famous book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 350-353.

38 José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, trans. Eugene L. Stockwell (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997).

39 Ibid., 107-127.

40 Ibid.

41 Míguez edited *Faces of Jesus*, one of the most important books on Christology in Latin America. The book is a collection of articles by Catholic and Protestant theologians who challenge the traditional ideologized images of Jesus and insist that Jesus was neither a defeated hero nor a heavenly monarch.

the Spirit. A theology of the Holy Spirit that takes seriously the unity in distinction within the Triune God could be a valuable theological principle for discerning how Christ and the Spirit are related with regard to the freedom and power of the Spirit as a gift of life. The implications of such a theology for mission are evident: Latin American Protestant churches need a theology of mission that reflects the signs of God's reign in the witness and power of the Spirit. The Church is called to proclaim a fully Trinitarian evangelization in history that is both personal and social, resulting in the growth and transformation of the world by trusting in the triune God.⁴² Míguez Bonino aims at an integral theology of mission that includes personal, social, communal, and structural dimensions of life and culture. Two prominent missiologists, Johannes Verkuyl (The Netherlands) and Willem Saayman (South Africa), have coined a phrase that expresses this integration: "*missio politica ecumenica*."⁴³ It means God's "politics" are to make the world a more integrated reality of justice, peace, and creation.

Eldin Villafañe, pentecostal theologian and ethicist, wrote *The Liberating Spirit* from Hispanic/Latino and pentecostal perspectives with the goal of developing a "holistic spirituality" that includes the presence and diaspora of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States within the pentecostal experience. Villafañe sees in this inclusive paradigm an alternative to the individualistic conversion so predominant in pentecostal circles.

A "holistic spirituality" is one in which creation as *imago Dei* is affirmed on personal, social, historical, political, and cultural levels, promoting God's kingdom in its eschatological tension toward its fulfillment. Here *missio Dei* is understood as "Christian community of the Spirit," which is a sign of the manifestation of the Triune God.⁴⁴ In what has become an increasing tendency among pentecostal theologians, that of emphasizing the place of the Holy Spirit within the Triune God, Steve J. Land has written *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* that stresses Villafañe's position by arguing that genuine pentecostal spirituality as a Trinitarian transformation needs to be based on a passion for the kingdom, which ultimately is a passion for God.⁴⁵ Land joins the ecumenical discussion in highlighting "the eschatological Trinity" as a pentecostal dimension while challenging pentecostals to a more inclusive perspective of mission and unity that integrates "apocalyptic vision" and "missionary fellowship" in a pentecostal passion toward God's kingdom.⁴⁶

Paul A. Pomerville, an Evangelical, conservative, and pentecostal missiologist, offers an appraisal of mission as *missio Dei* that stresses pentecostalism as an "emerging 'Third Force'" in mission. He sees the impact and importance of Third World Christianity (African, in particular) as a major breakthrough in missiology. According to Pomerville, the Holy Spirit is an active

42 José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, trans. William Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 117.

43 Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 394-402; and Willem Saayman, *Christian Mission in South Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa [UNISA], 1993), 5-21.

44 Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward a Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 165-191.

45 Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 182-219.

46 Ibid., 58-181.

agent as part of the Godhead. He recognizes the importance given to the Spirit in ecumenical circles⁴⁷ but underlines the “distortions”⁴⁸ of a *missio Dei* that neglects the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. “The missionary role of the Spirit, in biblical perspective, is related inseparably with the sending and empowering of the church in Great Commission mission.”⁴⁹ As many pentecostal missiologists do, Pomerville emphasizes the eschatological urgency and the demand to preach the Gospel to a lost humanity, calling the people to repentance and conversion empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰

The theologians just discussed reflect and express a particular tendency in theologies of mission: the integral, inclusive, and holistic dimension that takes seriously the personal, communal, social, and historical implications of contextual theologies.

James A. Scherer gives an accurate account of the discussion on “missionary thinking, planning and strategy.”⁵¹ He sees three main stages in the development of mission thinking in the ecumenical movement, particularly within the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches:

The first stage roughly from 1948 to 1961 is characterized by an emphasis on the *church as the agent of God’s mission*. The concept of *missio Dei* begins to gain acceptance in ecumenical circles. The second stage, from 1961 to 1975, is marked by a shift toward *the world as the locus for God’s mission*... The final period from 1975 to the present, is notable for its reaction against the one-sided worldly orientation of the previous period.⁵²

The attempt was to maintain a more balanced understanding of *missio Dei* in which church, kingdom, and world are interconnected, rather one than emphasized against another.

The 1947 International Missionary Conference in Whitby, Canada, emphasized the theme “Partners in Obedience.” The change from the plural concept of “missions” to the singular “mission” constituted a significant shift from the previous role of missionary societies as protagonists of mission and the impact of mission as *missio Dei* in mission theology. A call to mission in loyalty is essential to the Church’s active missionary agency. The main focus of the conference was to stress “a global partnership in evangelism” that combined a sharing of resources (personnel, finance, and policy) with a holistic approach to evangelism.⁵³

At Willingen, Germany, the 1952 International Missionary Council (IMC) reformulated the missionary mandate intertwining mission and unity in a call to proclaim the Gospel of the

47 Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission: A Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 129-143.

48 Ibid., 64-78.

49 Ibid., 163.

50 Veli Matti Karkkainen, “Missiology: Pentecostal and Charismatic,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 877-885.

51 James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 93.

52 Ibid., 94.

53 Ibid., 95. See also Lothar Bauerochse, *Learning to Live Together: Interchurch Partnerships as Ecumenical Communities of Learning*, trans. Cynthia Lies (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 30-35.

kingdom as a missionary vocation of the whole church. The key concept *missio Dei* was discussed, and a harsh criticism was introduced, challenging the churches to envision mission as “world-centered” not “church-centered.” Hans Hoekendijk, Dutch Reformed missiologist, made the following criticism underlining that the true context of mission is the world and not the church:

We attempt to look at things once again from the perspective of *God-World-Church* (rather than *God-Church-World*). This is the correct (theo-)logical mode of thinking. As soon as we speak of God, we also bring into speech the world as God’s theater stage of action. And it is foremost the Church who knows it and who will respect it. As soon as the Church acknowledges God, she also admits her own implicitly ‘eccentric’ position, hoping that at some point in time it may come true that she can serve as an instrument to honor the world’s worth and identity.⁵⁴

Hans Hoekendijk made a tremendous impact in the Americas with his book *The Church Inside Out* (1967) that contains both a call to live a diaspora incarnating the Good News in the world and a radical call to follow Jesus in what has been called his “theology of the apostolate.”⁵⁵ It is not the Church but the world, the *oikumene*, that stands in the centre of God’s concern.

For many participants at Willingen, Hoekendijk’s criticisms, along with internal disagreements, provoked a serious discussion that needed a response. They stressed the eschatological dimension of mission and the Church as a “foretaste of the kingdom” as a sign of God’s reign, already inaugurated by Jesus Christ but “not yet” manifest in all its fullness. The final compromise came in a document entitled “The Missionary Calling of the Church” in which a Trinitarian concept of *missio Dei* is intended as an answer to the criticism of a church-centered mission. The document portrayed the mission of the Church as being fulfilled by assuming God’s mission to it as an agent of reconciliation to the world through the crucified Lord and by announcing God’s kingdom until “the day of His coming.”⁵⁶

The phrase *missio Dei* initially had a tremendous impact in ecumenical circles, but it later took on so many different meanings and interpretations that it became merely a slogan rather than a guiding principle. In chapter six of this dissertation this concern is raised, particularly with regard to Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and its strategy for mission.

The next step in the development and implementation of *missio Dei* was the Conference of the International Missionary Council in Accra, Ghana (1958). The focal point of this Conference was the Church’s response to God’s action in the world. Beginning with this Conference, the insistence on a Trinitarian concept of mission became a pervasive and permanent motive in ecumenical thinking and paved the way for a theology of mission recognizing mission as more than church planting or paving a road from church to church. The emphasis shifted to *missio Dei* as “the work of the Triune God entrusted to the Church in each

⁵⁴ Norman Thomas, ed., *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 125.

⁵⁵ David Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 176-178.

⁵⁶ Lothar Bauerrochse, *Learning to Live Together*, 40-46. See also James Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom*, 98.

place by Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷

It is important to keep in mind that the 1960s decade following the Ghana Conference was an era of many changes at a global level. A wave of anti-colonialism and nationalism not only influenced the relationship between the churches in the north and the south but also marked a theological trend in more secular and liberation theologies in which the emphasis shifted from a church-oriented theology, as was mentioned, to a world-centered theology. The contextualizing process of theology and mission was an important discussion in theological circles in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁸ The idea of witnessing to God’s action in the world and being servants to a new humanity was predominant.

Several important ecumenical events occurred early in the 1960s, beginning with the WCC New Delhi Assembly (1961) with its incorporation of the International Missionary Council and the new membership of Orthodox and pentecostal churches. The Mexico 1963 meeting sponsored by the new Commission on Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC was also an important event, strengthening the emphasis on “Mission in Six Continents,” discussing how churches and organizations work together in mission, and emphasizing the concern for “the missionary structure of the congregation.” This decade was also a time of renewal in the Catholic Church, with Vatican II exerting influence not only in Catholic circles but also among Protestants all over the world. The agenda for mission and new relationships for church and society became central in the ecumenical agenda.⁵⁹

Other events and shifts in thinking also contributed to the ecumenical dialogue, such as the Liberation Theology movement and the conciliar process on development, liberation, and justice debated at the World Conference on Church and Society of the WCC in Geneva, Switzerland (1966). Third World theologies were becoming more visible and influential. As a result, the 1973 Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) in Bangkok, Thailand, with its emphasis on salvation and liberation, became a turning point in theological language and the political agenda.⁶⁰ The next General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1968) in Uppsala, Sweden, was also a turning point for the WCC and the ecumenical movement: “Uppsala set the unity and catholicity of the church squarely within the sphere of God’s activity in history.”⁶¹ At the 1975 General Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi, pressing socio-economic and political issues from the Third World were evident. New relationships in partnership were in the making: a theology of solidarity and reconciliation with an emphasis on human dignity and human rights was predominant.⁶² When the WCC gathered

57 James Scherer, “Mission Theology,” in *Toward the Twenty-First Century in Christian Mission*, ed. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 197.

58 An insightful theological and missiological analysis on these issues is offered in Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 163-192.

59 Ibid., 168-177.

60 Ibid., 177-192.

61 Ans J. van der Bent, “WCC Assemblies,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicolas Lossky et al., 1093.

62 An important factor in the ecumenical movement was the founding of the Ecumenical

for its 1983 Assembly in Vancouver under the theme: “Jesus Christ: The Life of the World,” the ecumenical movement faced a critical moment, particularly regarding the role of the Church in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The cry for justice and peace is also the cry for solidarity in a new partnership.⁶³

The conciliar movement expressed in the WCC shifted from a theology of missions to a theology of mission, singular, with the main emphasis on God as a missionary God. The Church in this new framework joined in the initiative from God as a missionary Church in the diaspora of the world, making the concept *missio Dei* predominant.

Koinonia as Sharing in Partnership

Koinonia is a biblical concept that made a definite impact in the ecumenical movement during the twentieth century. Its influence can be seen in numerous documents, statements, and conferences in which the Church was the main theme.⁶⁴ The richness of this biblical concept offers many possible exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological interpretations.

One of the more detailed exegetical and hermeneutical analyses is offered by John Reumann in the context of the Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in *Santiago de Compostela* (1993). Reumann pointed out that even with all the diversity within the ecumenical movement, the different emphases within the New Testament itself, and the plurality of ecclesiastical traditions in the ecumenical family, it is possible to reach some consensus.⁶⁵

Faith and Order’s emphasis on *koinonia* and witness has solid biblical support, in terms of sharing the Good News (evangelism), service (*diakonia*), and faith as both personal testimony and as doctrinal assent. *Koinonia* is present in the life of Jesus, the Spirit, and the Father. It is a hope of glory and eternal life in a coming kingdom, manifested here and now in a praxis of solidarity in suffering, and in sharing material goods and spiritual gifts.⁶⁶

Reumann raises three relevant questions with regard to *koinonia* and ecumenical consensus. Can a theology of *koinonia* be elaborated out of the biblical references? Reumann’s response to this question is a qualified yes; the resulting theology must respect the semantics and

Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). At local levels within the Third World, partnership was expressed in Basic Christian Communities. For a valuable analysis of this process, see Julio de Santa Ana, *Ecumenismo y liberación* (Madrid, Spain-Sao Paulo, Brazil: Ediciones Paulinas-Ecumenical Center for Popular Education [CESEP], 1987), 252-258.

63 Ibid., 250-252. The impact of this Assembly in Latin America is evident in the Spanish edition of the official Assembly publication: Julio Barreiro, ed., *El combate por la vida* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1984), 124-126.

64 Jean-Marie Tillard, “*Koinonía*,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicolas Lossky et al, 568-574.

65 John Reumann, “*Koinonía en las escrituras: vista panorámica de los textos bíblicos*,” in *Diálogo ecuménico* xxix 94-95 (1994), ed. Adolfo Gonzalez Montes (Madrid, Spain: Centro de Estudios Orientales y Ecuménicos “Juan XXIII”), 239-286. See also *Hacia la koinonía en la fe, la vida y el testimonio. Documento de estudio. Quinta Conferencia Mundial de Fe y Constitución*, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (April 1993), 19-26.

66 Ibid., 277.

context of biblical texts. Is it possible to articulate an ecclesiology of *koinonia*? Reumann believes an ecclesiology of *koinonia* is possible, but such an ecclesiology must take into consideration the diversity of ecclesial structure already present in the New Testament. Can *koinonia* be contextualized without losing its biblical meaning? Reumann says yes, *koinonia* can be contextualized by affirming both the church and our comprehension of God. It should be no surprise that faith, life, and testimony in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) are directly related to the God who is Creator and Redeemer in the faith, life, and testimony of the Old Testament. The New Testament offers a valid definition of the church that is relevant for us today.

Koinonia is a term the church adopted from Greco-Roman culture to describe the experiences of the Gospel and life in Christ and the Spirit, incorporating the social dimensions of the concept, reformulating the concept, relating it to solidarity with the suffering and the poor and disinherited, and encouraging a love to the neighbor without social prejudices. This kind of ecclesiology is both relevant and challenging if the church lives in fellowship, is willing to cross frontiers in the world, and shares hospitality as inclusive as the New Testament church did.⁶⁷

Justo L. González analyzes the context and mission of the early church, insisting that *koinonia* means partnership: sharing material goods, and participating in a communal fellowship.⁶⁸ In his study of Paul's ecclesiology, Marcelino Legido shows that *koinonia* is a fellowship in obedience that is transformed in a fellowship of service sharing the life of Christ with an enslaved world.⁶⁹

Martien E. Brinkman basically follows Reumann's analysis but also traces the theological development and implications of *koinonia* for Faith and Order and other initiatives of the World Council of Churches.⁷⁰ According to Brinkman,

Koinonia means, in addition, participation in the holy things of God and the communion of the saints of all times and places (*communio sanctorum*) in the double sense of the word. Each local Christian community is related in *koinonia* with all other local Christian communities with whom it shares the same faith. In this *koinonia* they live the catholicity of the church. In the concept of *koinonia* there are several dimensions, which makes it especially useful for ecumenical ecclesiology.⁷¹

Brinkman goes even further by suggesting:

In the first place, in the current ecumenical ecclesiological debates *koinonia* functions as a concept of synthesis. It is not an alternative to any of the New Testament images and metaphors for the Church. Rather, *koinonia* pulls together the basic thread of such images. Since *koinonia* is regarded as a comprehensive category, it is not surprising that it is used to express the quintessence of the Church. *Koinonia* means that the visible bond

⁶⁷ Ibid., 279-282.

⁶⁸ Justo L. González, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Church Ideas on the Origin, Significance and Use of Money* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990), 79-83.

⁶⁹ Marcelino Legido, *Fraternidad en el mundo: Un estudio de eclesiología Paulina* (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Sígueme, 1986), 210-286, 289-304.

⁷⁰ Martien E. Brinkman, *Progress in Unity? Fifty Years of Theology within the World Council of Churches: 1945-1995. A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI-Louvain: W. B. Eerdmans & Peeters Press, 1995), 11-12.

⁷¹ Ibid., 18.

with God that, at the same time, is the bond of the new community, is the sign and the instrument of God's reconciling purpose.⁷²

These expanding definitions of *koinonia* demonstrate how a biblical concept can offer theological and conceptual insights while avoiding the imposition of one's own ideas and conceptions. The other important biblical dimension is that it expands the possibilities of images and metaphors while showing the need for aiming at a consensus without using jargon or empty phrases.

Other very helpful concepts from Brinkman's analysis are worth quoting here: A real *koinonia* ecclesiology can function as a catalyst, but new formulations and statements, as such, will not trigger the much-needed breakthrough to greater unity. A breakthrough will more likely be sparked off by stories of the Gospel drama of lived *koinonia*: the stories of communities of various traditions that – in the destitution of Somalia, or in the crucible of Bosnia, or in the chaos of Russia, or in the moral-spiritual void in Europe and North America, or in the grinding poverty in the streets of Washington or Manila – experience anew the *koinonia* of the one Body of Christ.⁷³

To this important statement Brinkman adds the relationship between a spirit of *koinonia* and a *koinonia* in the Spirit:

Careful, expectant, prayerful listening to the Lord of history and the Church, through the stories of his people, can become the means by which the Spirit of *koinonia* brings about a deepened and embodied *koinonia* of the Spirit.⁷⁴

Two other phenomena, contextualization and inculturalization, challenge the vision of an ecumenical agenda to take seriously cultural, political, economic, and religious diversity in order to understand better the role of the ecumenical movement and its relevant theology in real solidarity with all humankind and in Christian mission, which is another dimension of *koinonia*.⁷⁵ The struggle toward a "Costly Unity" is mediated by the tension between Church and kingdom, as the Church is a prophetic sign of the kingdom that is God's gift for the unity of God's people and all humankind. This struggle is crucial for the contemporary discussion of the role of the ecumenical movement, an ecumenical ecclesiology, and the pertinent ecumenical witness (ethics) much needed in a broken world.⁷⁶

In 1987 the WCC organized a World Conference on Ecumenical Sharing of Resources in El Escorial, Spain: "*Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community*." The immediate background for this meeting was the establishment of the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources (ESR) process by the WCC to respond to the challenges of "resource-sharing" and hence the need to work out a common basis or ecumenical discipline as a guide for new relationships of sharing."⁷⁷

The El Escorial World Conference was organized around general theological, biblical,

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 76-81. The dimension of *koinonía* as solidarity will be analyzed in chapter four, p. 34, where these concepts are applied to the Latin American and Caribbean context.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 137-143.

⁷⁷ Huibert van Beek, ed., *Sharing Life in a World Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 107.

and liturgical perspectives that included a regional preparatory process and gathering around celebration as a Eucharistic fellowship. The main focus then turned to the proposed guidelines for the ecumenical sharing of resources. As one of the drafters of these “Guidelines for Sharing,” this author must convey the sense both of frustration and of optimism that was experienced at El Escorial as the assembly discussed and approved the Guidelines. The enthusiasm sprang from agreement on a common agenda for continuing work toward ecumenical partnership in the sharing of resources. However, the frustration resulted from the lack of a more specific and concrete agreement on new rules of engagement in partnership.

The road to equality in the sharing of ecumenical resources has been paved with many obstacles. However, the consultation dared to touch on some important issues regarding ecumenical relationships and to challenge churches and ecumenical organizations to a new effort in moving toward genuine partnership in world community.

The “Guidelines for Sharing” combine some general theological principles on sharing God’s life as shared in the Trinity with the celebration of the Eucharist as the sign of healing for the whole creation in a broken world.⁷⁸ The second portion of the document is a call to commitment to the discipline of sharing ecumenical resources, with an emphasis on solidarity in the different contexts where churches share life, confronting all the economic, political, cultural, and gender issues while aiming at a “new economic and political order.”⁷⁹

El Escorial was the culmination of forty years of ecumenical dialogue on issues of partnership. It was also the departure toward new experiences and hopefully new practices of genuine sharing in God’s mission. The *koinonia* (ecumenical fellowship) manifested in a “companionship” (a word now preferred in some ecumenical circles) needs more concrete efforts toward sharing God’s mission in a world still in desperate need of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Koinonia can be understood as partnership from biblical and theological perspectives. It includes the sharing of human resources, material goods, and communal fellowship. *Koinonia* as a central concept in the New Testament provides key elements in the development of an ecumenical ecclesiology. *Koinonia* as the life of the Spirit lived out in the Church is also relevant in the New Testament.

Koinonia means that the Church is called to a commitment of solidarity toward unity as a witness in a broken and divided world. Sharing in God’s Mission requires the ecumenical sharing of resources as a concrete manifestation of a communal fellowship in worship and the caring for God’s creation.

Sharing in Partnership: Ecumenical and Feminist Perspectives

Partnership is a concept that was introduced in the ecumenical movement in order to apply and expand the biblical word *koinonia*. It was a secular concept that found resonance and relevance in ecumenical language. Partnership emerged from colonial experiments and policies, particularly by the British Empire, loaded with economic, commercial, business, and political meanings. It had a direct relationship with the way in which a metropolis or colonial power established levels of “dominion,” “trusteeship,” or “partnership” related to the exercise of power

⁷⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 28. See also Lothar Bauerochse, *Learning to Live Together*, 76-83.

and control and the possibilities of self-governing or independence. The process of decolonization and the creation of a commonwealth of independent nations turned the process of partnership into a struggle for rights and sovereignty.⁸⁰

The concept, then, served as a principle to enhance and better delineate the relationships between churches in the north and the south, particularly with missionary societies. Like other similar concepts it evolved into terms like “autonomy,” “reciprocity,” and “respect.” When the concept *missio Dei* was used and applied, it related to the fact that theological partnership is understood as “partners in God’s mission,” or “partners in obedience.” Furthermore, partnership was essential to establishing better interchurch relations and developing the mission and unity of the churches. Finally, partnership was increasingly connected to issues of equality, justice, and the integrity of creation.⁸¹ A more inclusive understanding of the ecumenical principle “the integrity of creation” should consider also the moral and spiritual dimensions in caring for all of God’s creation.

Stephen Neill offered some insights on partnership, primarily focusing on the tension between the missionary societies and the younger churches. The main focus on the one hand was the possibilities of allowing growth toward more autonomy and independence while, on the other hand maintaining the active role of missions and missionaries in evangelizing.⁸²

Max Warren developed a theological and ecumenical perspective on partnership that takes seriously the semantic, philosophical, and business meaning of the word. A theology of partnership is one that begins in God, moves into God’s relationship with humanity, and is expressed in human relations.⁸³ It is a *koinonia* in sharing and action--a fellowship in Christ shared in the breaking of bread. Partnership is a sharing in the life of a Christian community; it is a sharing in an ecumenical ideal and vision for Christian mission.⁸⁴ Partnership in a multi-racial society is a struggle for equality and justice. Warren analyzes certain passages of the New Testament (Romans 15 and II Corinthians 8:4, 9:13) and stresses their relevance to partnership as pivotal for the Church and its mission.⁸⁵

More recently Andrew Kirk, professor and missionary in Argentina with first hand knowledge of Liberation Theology and the Third World particularly in Latin America, has written an important textbook on theology of mission containing an entire section on partnership.⁸⁶ He is able to combine an evangelical progressive perspective with a sensitive, balanced, and sympathetic approach to liberation theology. His effort primarily calls attention to what mission means today and elaborates on some of the challenges that lie ahead. Kirk develops a theology of mission with the foundational principles of *missio Dei* and describes the Church’s

80 Lothar Bauerochse, *Learning to Live Together*, 88-93.

81 Ibid., 93-95.

82 Stephen Neill, *Christian Partnership* (London, UK: Society for Christian Mission Press, 1952).

83 Max Warren, *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* (London, UK: Society for Christian Mission Press, 1956), 11-35.

84 Ibid., 52-98.

85 Ibid., 52, 99-127.

86 J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 1-22.

response. “This means that God’s mission is carried out in both the world and the Church; to a lesser degree in human history untouched by the Gospel, to a greater degree where the Gospel is believed and obeyed.”⁸⁷

Kirk follows both the history of and the contemporary discussion on partnership. His basic understanding and theological conviction is expressed in the following terms:

It may therefore be even harder to lay hold of the notion that ‘partnership in mission’ also belongs to the essence of the Church: partnership is not so much what the Church *does* as what it *is*. Churches (theologically) belong to one another, for God has called each ‘into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord’ (1Cor.1: 9). Partnership is therefore not a nice slogan that some clever committee has dreamt up; it is the expression of one, indivisible, common life in Jesus Christ.⁸⁸

Kirk argues that *koinonia* is the closest biblical expression for partnership and sees four characteristics of discipleship in the New Testament that express this idea: first as a common project, second as a sharing of gifts, third as the sharing of material resources, and fourth as a sharing in suffering. Interestingly enough, Kirk stresses the fact that this partnership in suffering based on the incarnation of Jesus Christ is expressed in another word as solidarity, which became a predominant concept in Latin American ecumenical circles and in Liberation Theology in the 1970s and 1980s. Later in this chapter reference is made to partnership as solidarity, particularly in regard to the Sao Paulo Process.⁸⁹ The Sao Paulo Process is a program established by the Latin American and Caribbean Office of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC-USA).

Kirk expands on the obstacles to partnership, raising very concrete and practical issues like dependency and freedom, mutual learning in trust, shared responsibility in the sharing of finances, and the exercise of power and accountability. He underlines that cooperation in mutual commitment to mission in Christ as the way to improve north-south relations.⁹⁰

Letty M. Russell, a well-known Presbyterian theologian, has dealt with the concept of partnership from a feminist point of view. Her contributions as a pioneer feminist theologian are recognized among her peers and in academic and ecclesiastical circles. In searching for an understanding of partnership from a feminist perspective one needs to comprehend the central motives in feminist theologizing. Feminist theology is conversational, strongly narrative, and relational in friendship and solidarity of resistance. It is profoundly committed to the ethical demand for equality and justice and the naming of God with inclusive metaphors that respect the feminist identity and place in history.⁹¹ Russell calls attention to the validity of partnership, as well as to the need to expand and respond to pressing issues related to human relationships and new dimensions of life in community and the life of humankind toward the future. It is a partnership that asks for “a new focus of relationship in a common history of Jesus Christ that

87 Ibid., 37.

88 Ibid., 189.

89 Ibid., 191.

90 Ibid., 191-204.

91 A recent book honoring Letty Russell expands on these ideas; see Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, ed., *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999).

sets persons free.”⁹² With this basic affirmation Russell develops a theology of partnership that emphasizes *koinonia* as building community in giving and receiving, in participating and imparting. The Lord’s Supper is a sign of these elements in one body, respecting differences and affirming identities while maintaining a unity in diversity.⁹³

In dealing with the realities of inequality and the obstacles to genuine partnership, there is a need to remember that humankind is made in God’s image and is invited to be a partner in creation.⁹⁴ It is important to affirm that God, the mystery of life, calls us into this partnership as a gift, and that the call includes all human relationships. “It is the *koinonia*-creating presence of Christ that makes partnership among Christians possible.”⁹⁵ As Christians move in hope toward a future in partnership, they need to remember that “God’s partnership with us frees us to ask questions and to hope expectantly in the new possibilities of our lives.”⁹⁶ Russell, then, challenges the imagination and the capacity to construct a future of partnership in a better society, with new relationships of equality in freedom and a new vision of hope.⁹⁷

This feminist perspective on partnership emphasizes a relational dimension in which human relationships are based in communal life, with visible signs that celebrate God’s calling and presence as a mystery of life. Feminist ecumenism embodies a concept of partnership that God makes concrete in history in the person of Jesus Christ, expressed in the partaking of the Lord’s Supper and manifested in a commitment to struggle for a better future.

Koinonia as partnership was the main emphasis in ecumenical circles. It became more identified with solidarity in unity and the sharing of ecumenical resources. Both a feminist theologian like Letty M. Russell and ecumenical theologians envision a future of cooperation (ecumenical emphasis) in ecumenical sharing and the struggle for a true partnership in a solidarity of resistance to construct better relationships--personal, communal, and social.

Philippine and Latin American Experiments in Partnership

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP)

This part of this investigation analyzes the impact and influence of partnership in Latin America and Asia. Two projects are selected in order to demonstrate the new experiments in mission and unity between the churches in the north and the south and at national and regional levels. The first experience is the Partnership in Mission of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP). The second experience is the Sao Paulo Process, a joint venture between North American and Latin American churches.

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines was established as a new national denomination in order to unite six different denominations that began missions in the Philippines.⁹⁸ The document “Partnership in Mission: The United Church of Christ in the

92 Letty M. Russell, *The Future of Partnership* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1979), 16.

93 Ibid., 19-20.

94 Ibid., 21-45.

95 Ibid., 56.

96 Ibid., 155.

97 Ibid., 157-176.

98 *Partnership in Mission: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines* (Quezon City,

Philippines” establishing this union contains four major sections that are summarized here, showing the key theological concepts and some of the guiding principles in theory-praxis dialectic.

The first section contextualizes the history of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines. It begins with the geography and strategic location of the archipelago of thousands of islands, which are the roots of the Filipino people (race, culture, and religiosity). The modern Philippines are directly related to a colonial presence (Spain and the United States), with all the customary power structures and institutions of domination and oppression. One important dimension of this history is the resistance of the Filipino people to any foreign domination and their struggle for independence and sovereignty in a modern nation. The process included not only resistance but also the effort to transform the colonial mentality of the Filipino people.⁹⁹

The second section of the “Partnership in Mission” document deals with the situation immediately after World War II as a more radical attitude and a new wave of nationalism erupted, including the demand for better economic conditions, genuine development, land reform, and a desire for sovereignty, justice, and peace.¹⁰⁰ The Filipino people have continued this process toward “self-determination and dignity.”

The document goes on to stress that the UCCP is a direct product of the presence and work of mission boards from the United States and their “evangelization and expansion programs.” It also included in its philosophy of mission the “building of churches, schools, dormitories, and hospitals.”¹⁰¹

One of the key issues in this process is how to move from the paternalistic attitude of missionaries, with their foreign control and resources to a self-supporting and a self-governing model of mission. The UCCP declared a moratorium on missionaries and funding for development projects from North America and Europe in 1974, but some local churches defied the moratorium and continued bilateral relationships with churches abroad, even receiving individual favors for local development. The UCCP participated in the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources internationally, including providing training for qualified leaders who ultimately migrated to the West. This migration was seen as a serious hindrance to the “ongoing development of the church.”¹⁰²

The UCCP started a process toward establishing “new patterns of relationships” with the churches in other parts of the world, including Asia. Out of this process the UCCP established its guidelines and principles.¹⁰³ The UCCP actively continued to participate in ecumenical projects with mainline denominations in the United States and within the ecumenical movement in Asia, including the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).

The principle laid out in the “Partnership in Mission” document is that the “UCCP understanding of partnership is informed and shaped by the Biblical expressions of community

the Philippines: Ecumenical and International Relations Desk, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 1991), 4.

99 Ibid., 2-3.

100 Ibid., 3.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid., 4.

103 Ibid., 5.

and relationship as the *mission of God*” (emphasis mine).¹⁰⁴ The other under girding principle in this more theological section of the document is the affirmation that God is the One who invites the people to new relationships, as testified in the Bible. This process of the formation of a people leads to a relationship within the reign of God as “enfleshed” in the life of Christ, toward a new humanity in plurality of cultures and nations.¹⁰⁵

By affirming and choosing a true partnership among churches in a global community, the UCCP affirms:

The churches of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines join in the affirmation of an ecumenical agenda based on covenanting with churches throughout the world to realize a process of awareness building and empowerment toward life shared in all its fullness within the world community.¹⁰⁶

To move into areas of cooperation the UCCP emphasizes the need to share all resources in concrete expressions of solidarity, unity, and learning in mutual support. It is a “covenantal relationship” with churches at all levels.¹⁰⁷ The document concludes with very specific instructions on how to implement these guidelines in policies for co-workers and interns in ministry.¹⁰⁸

This “Partnership in Mission” document is solid both theologically and missiologically. It is an important effort to contextualize mission while maintaining a global dimension. It offers positive alternatives to churches not only to serve their own people locally but also to relate to sister churches outside of the Philippines while aiming at equality, justice, less dependency, and mutual accountability in sharing ecumenical resources. Furthermore, the statement is a vibrant, passionate call to a renewal in God’s mission as partners of God’s reign.

The Sao Paulo Process

The Sao Paulo Process is a program originally established by the Latin America and the Caribbean office of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States (NCCC-USA) as an effort to coordinate programs and projects with church and ecumenical organizations in the region. The first consultation took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in May of 1986. The main objective of that consultation was the evaluation of the current practices and strategies and future strategies and relationships. An analysis of Latin American socio-economic conditions, ecclesial situation, and biblical studies were part of the consultation.¹⁰⁹

The underlying principle that started this process is expressed in terms of a need “to start an ongoing process of sharing, of discovering one another, and of growing together.”¹¹⁰ The process itself then continued a series of important meetings to deepen the discussion of the

104 Ibid., 6.

105 Ibid., 7-8.

106 Ibid., 10.

107 Ibid., 11-12.

108 Ibid., 13-19.

109 Oscar L. Bolioli, ed., *El reino es pan, justicia y liberación*. (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1987).

110 Oscar L. Bolioli, ed., *Hope and Justice for All in the Americas. Discerning God’s Mission* (New York: Friendship Press, 1998), 152.

issues, obstacles, and challenges that lie ahead. The next two meetings opened the discussion on partnership, with special consideration on moving away from the donor-recipient emphasis of the past. The next meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, (1987) was an honest attempt by executives from the churches in the United States to listen and respond to the plea from Latin Americans to be treated like equals. Participants decided to continue in the process in spite of any difficulty, in a spirit of mutual criticism and solidarity.¹¹¹

It was in Indianapolis, Indiana, (1989) that a more elaborate conference was organized with the active participation of delegates from all parts of Latin America, particularly those ecumenical organizations with bilateral and multilateral relationships. The meeting in Indianapolis demonstrated a new depth of theological reflection, influenced by liberation theology and complemented by a solid biblical hermeneutic. As Oscar L. Bolioli, Director of the Latin America Office of the NCCC-USA, expressed: "Indianapolis was when we first started believing that it was possible. It was there that commitments were defined, and the credibility of the process began to grow."¹¹²

The consultation-evaluation of the Sao Paulo Process in Lake Yojoa, Honduras, (1992) made a significant discovery. The north-south relationship was still predicated by the assumption that the north did not behave like a region, namely the United States, but as separate churches relating to a region, Latin America and the Caribbean. The call to move from dependency to solidarity was expressed. Once more the socio-economic analysis and the theological and biblical insights from prominent sociologists, economists, theologians, and biblical scholars helped to mediate the complexities of the north-south relationships in the context of a global economy dominated by neoliberal economic and adjustment policies, which led to talk more of economic and social exclusion than merely of poverty.¹¹³

The consultation in Honduras was able to define three important perspectives for future work. First, some new issues needed more attention: ecology in the perspective of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) established by the WCC to address cultural and racial issues, gender issues, and ethical dimensions related to systemic corruption. Second, consideration was needed to develop more specific strategies in the different sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to clarify the different contexts present. Third, deeper analysis of issues like exclusion, marginality, and solidarity was needed to provide more clarity and specificity.¹¹⁴ The Honduras gathering proved to be very productive but left untouched the crucial problem that made clear the urgent need for a meeting of the churches of the north and south to discuss the place and role of the churches in these gatherings. A conference of churches and councils of churches of the Americas was convened in San Jose, Costa Rica, (1997) for that purpose, bringing together the Council of Churches of Christ in the United States (NCCC-USA) with the Caribbean Council of Churches (CCC) and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI).

The San Jose conference was designed as a "missiology consultation." It paid attention to the same socio-economic and political issues as the Honduras conference, but it also

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *Evaluation-Consultation of the Sao Paulo Process* (Lake Yojoa, Honduras: Latin American Coordination of the National Council of Churches, LACO-NCCC-USA, 1993), 3.

¹¹³ Ibid., 14-38.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 46-49.

intentionally engaged the churches of the north and the south in dialogue. A serious commitment was affirmed between the three councils of churches in the Americas (NCCC-USA, CCC, CLAI) to continue dealing with issues of mission and unity, as well as areas of service and solidarity. The statement drafted by the conference clearly stressed key themes to continue in this process: “Hunger for bread, hunger for God, and hunger for humanity, the Gospel and culture. Ecumenism today, mission as a responsibility of all.”¹¹⁵

The Sao Paulo Process in the Americas started as an effort by the NCCC-USA to better coordinate mission projects in sharing ecumenical resources and to enable relationships of respect and mutual accountability between north and south churches. It demonstrated the possibility of creating new ways of partnering in mission and challenged the churches to take more seriously their role of nurturing hope on a continent in turmoil. This process had been implemented by United Church of Christ in the Philippines, challenging it to become a new national denomination that responded to the Filipino context with its colonial heritage and to the search for self-determination and real independence. The UCCP moved from a paternalistic missionary heritage to a self-governing model of mission with a mature ecumenical partnership of sharing resources and leading to ongoing solidarity and unity.

The Sao Paulo Process also raised the importance of theological reflection and contextual analysis in developing a more integrated model of mission. Theological discussions dealt with issues that included the move from dependency to solidarity in the context of a global neo-liberal economy that produced marginality and exclusion. Challenges for the future relate to the cultural and racial dimensions of envisioning a new humanity in a future of hope.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided some insightful theological elements of mission. First, theologians from different traditions and theological positions arrive at consensus, stressing that a theology of mission affirms the triune God as a missionary God and defining mission as God’s Mission, *missio Dei*. This theological approach includes “holistic,” integral, and inclusive dimensions of mission. Second, the conciliar process follows the same path as theology in affirming that mission is God’s Mission, *missio Dei*, and emphasizing that God is the subject of mission moving from God to the world and the Church.

Third, *koinonia* is analyzed from biblical and theological perspectives, concluding that communion as a Christian fellowship in worship and witness in service is essential to the Church and calls for a commitment in solidarity toward unity and caring for God’s creation. Fourth, *koinonia* as partnership is seen as ecumenical cooperation in the concrete sharing of resources.

Fifth, a feminist theologian challenges the existing structures of relationship claiming to construct better relationships in a future of hope for all humanity. Sixth, the UCCP and the Sao Paulo Process offer a common witness in moving from the experiences of colonial and missionary heritage to self-determination. The main goal of this Process is to move from economic dependency, social marginality, and exclusion to self-support and dignity, dealing with racial, cultural, and ecological issues and thus enabling inclusive societies in inclusive churches.

¹¹⁵ Oscar L. Bolioli, ed., *Hope and Justice for All in the Americas*, 1-9.

CHAPTER III

MAINLINE PROTESTANTISM IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

Protestant theologians in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to struggle with their identity and mission during the twentieth century. Identity and mission both stem from the “historical memory” of the people of God as they search for meaning, look for a new vision, and hope toward the future.¹¹⁶ Historical memory involves reclaiming historical roots (heritage) and envisioning the future (destiny).¹¹⁷

A sense of heritage and a view toward destiny—a shared historical memory—are constant themes in any interpretation of Latin America Protestantism to this day. A brief summary of some prevalent interpretations will help point out the importance of historical memory.

Identity and Mission: Protestant Interpretations

Both Latin Americans and foreign missionaries have written interpretations of the struggle of churches in Latin America. Tomás Goslin,¹¹⁸ Jorge P. Howard, and Samuel Guy Inman, Secretary of the Cooperation Committee on Latin America (CCLA),¹¹⁹ wrote from a missionary perspective, showing how the Latin American churches became permeated with social, economic, and political influences.¹²⁰

Argentinian theologian José Míguez Bonino sees the relationship between history and

116 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *El protestantismo latinoamericano: Entre la crisis y el desafío* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1981) is an attempt to deal with this issue of identity and mission from Latin American, Caribbean, and ecumenical perspectives. See also Antonio Carlos Barro, “The Identity of Protestantism in Latin America,” in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 229-252; and Lauri Emilio Wirth, “Protestantismo, memória e esperança,” *Estudos de religiao X* (11), 81-89, (December 1995).

117 José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, trans. Eugene L. Stockwell (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997), vii. Míguez makes this clear statement: “I am not given to introspection--perhaps for fear of what I might discover--but I came to the conclusion that two issues are probably responsible for the choice of this topic. Both are shamefully subjective. The first is the necessity, which in truth I had never felt explicitly, to clarify for myself *my own confessional and doctrinal identity*” (emphasis mine). See Juan Bosch, “Introducción a la teología protestante latinoamericana,” in *Panorama de la teología latinoamericana*, ed. Juan José Tamayo and Juan Bosch (Estella, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino 2000), 53-91. Bosch gives an excellent summary of the trajectory of Protestant theology in Latin America and its search for a “Protestant theology in Latin America.”

118 Tomás S. Goslin, *Los evangélicos en América Latina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1956).

119 Samuel Guy Inman, *Obrando por cuenta propia* (New York: La Nueva Democracia, 1929).

120 Jorge P. Howard, *La otra conquista de América* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1951).

mission as one of “heritage-destiny,” always searching for newness of life and a better future.¹²¹ Mexican ecumenist, Congregational theologian, and philosopher Alberto Rembao interprets Protestantism as “transcendent democracy” and “cultural Protestantism,” both phrases that he invented to exemplify Protestantism as a progressive ideology in Latin America, dealing with aspects of culture as well as with matters of faith.¹²² Sante Uberto Barbieri described Protestantism as a creative force for the education of the people, an alternative in the face of nationalism, communism, and rationalism as the full realization of freedom.¹²³ Uruguayan ecumenist Julio de Santa Ana underlines positive contributions that Protestantism can offer to Latin America as Protestants search to be faithful to a liberating Christ.¹²⁴ Samuel Escobar and Orlando Costas, two prominent Evangelical missiologists, see the connection between identity and mission as a clue to understanding the reality, life, and future of Protestantism in Latin America.¹²⁵

The identity crisis of Latin American Protestantism and the need for a “new consciousness” in concrete mission and unity are described by Orlando Costas as “Tradition and Reconstruction.”¹²⁶ Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves¹²⁷ analyzes the faith-ideology tension as a crucial element as Protestantism tries to be a transforming (Utopian) force in the midst of oppression and injustice.¹²⁸ Tomás Gutiérrez, author of a book on Peruvian and Latin American Protestantism, relates the “mission and identity” of the Protestant presence from the sixteenth century to the present as an identity in search of historical relevancy and mission for today.¹²⁹ Carmelo E. Álvarez uses the categories of “crisis and challenge” to interpret the dialectical relationship of historical roots and ecumenical challenges in this historical-missiological

121 José Míguez Bonino, “*Historia y misión*,” in *Protestantismo y liberalismo en América Latina*, Carmelo E. Álvarez, José Míguez Bonino, and Roberto Craig (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI-Latin American Biblical Seminary, 1983), 15-36.

122 Alberto Rembao, *Democracia trascendente* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1945).

123 Sante Uberto Barbieri, *El país de El Dorado* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1962).

124 Julio de Santa Ana, *Protestantismo, cultura y sociedad* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1970).

125 Samuel Escobar, “*Identidad, misión y futuro del protestantismo latinoamericano*,” *Taller del teología* 3 (1978), 35-60; and Orlando E. Costas, *El protestantismo en América Latina hoy: ensayos del camino 1972-1974* (San Jose, Costa Rica: INDEF, 1975), 41-76.

126 Orlando Costas, *Compromiso y misión* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Editorial Caribe, 1979), 15-28.

127 Rubem Alves, *Dogmatismo e tolerancia* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Edicoes Paulinas, 1983).

128 For a more detailed analysis, see Carmelo E. Álvarez, “*Del protestantismo liberal al protestantismo liberador*,” in *Protestantismo y liberalismo en América Latina*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez, José Míguez Bonino, and Roberto Craig, 37-56.

129 Tomás S. Gutiérrez, *Los evangélicos en Perú y América Latina: Ensayos sobre su historia* (Lima, Peru: Ediciones CEHILA-AHP, 1997).

tension.¹³⁰ More recently, Argentinian historian Pablo Alberto Deiros based the chapters of his book *Protestantismo en América Latina* on the following questions: “Where do we come from? How have we developed? What has been our profile? Where are we today? Where do we go from here? How are we doing? What can we expect?”¹³¹ These church leaders have given us clear examples of this search for identity and mission in Latin American Protestantism. The ultimate question here is what will Protestantism do in Latin America?¹³²

Mainline Protestantism’s search for identity in mission and unity is the main topic of analysis of this chapter. This analysis will demonstrate how these churches tried to respond and be faithful to their joint mission in the conflicting cultural circumstances of Latin America. The secondary topic covered in this chapter is the diversity and complexity of Mainline Protestantism in Latin America.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the term “Mainline Protestantism” takes into consideration the influence of historical, missiological, and theological dimensions of the liberal movement in the United States on nineteenth century Mainline Protestant churches. American historian George M. Marsden notes a “modernist impulse” in Christianity during that time:

The modernist principle, then, reflected the optimistic and progressive principles of the era, that a higher Christianity had evolved from the Bible and could be found in the best of modern civilization.¹³³

Six main elements characterize Mainline Protestantism in Latin America and the Caribbean. First, Protestantism introduces a new ideology of progress and the advancement of civilization. Second, Mainline Protestant theologians think of themselves as innovators and prophets of a new era of intellectual freedom and optimism, offering the potential for success. Third, Protestants preach higher ethical standards and morality. Fourth, Protestant efforts inspire Latin Americans to unite in promoting cooperation to transform the world and the existing conditions in society. Fifth, Protestants manifest a new trust in scientific knowledge and enlightened, rational principles. Sixth, they promote social justice and search for equality and freedom for all human beings.¹³⁴

This new Protestant theological stance can be succinctly summarized as follows: “God became less a supernatural being and more an immanent divine presence, he also became a source of enduring comfort in times of breathtaking change.”¹³⁵

130 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *El protestantismo latinoamericano: Entre la crisis y el desafío* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1981).

131 Pablo Deiros, *Protestantismo en América Latina* (Nashville, KY: Editorial Caribe, 1997).

132 I am paraphrasing Míguez, who raised these questions with regard to Christianity in Latin America. See José Míguez Bonino, “The Conditions and Prospects of Christianity in Latin America,” in *New Face of the Church in Latin America*, ed. Guillermo Cook (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 266.

133 George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 128.

134 Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 279-291.

135 Ibid., 291.

Protestant Presence in Latin America and the Caribbean

Scattered throughout Latin America and the Caribbean are diverse Protestant churches that are based on concepts of inclusivity and decentralization. For José Míguez Bonino, Protestant ecclesiologies and evangelism begin with autonomy, freedom, and initiative:

In general, Protestantism tends to locate the ecclesial reality basically in the congregation. That has fostered a certain vitality, a capacity for incarnation in historical reality, which we could call "localization."¹³⁶

The first Protestants to arrive in Latin America were mainly entrepreneurs who were more interested in the opportunity for commerce than in spreading the Gospel. The first group arrived in 1528 after King Carlos I of Spain, as part of a debt payment, authorized the Welser German banking family to establish a colony in what is now Venezuela.¹³⁷ The Welsers were followed in 1555 by a group of Huguenots, French Protestants following John Calvin's teaching, who settled in Brazil to escape persecution at home.¹³⁸ In the early seventeenth century a group of Dutch Protestants immigrated to Pernambuco, Brazil.¹³⁹ All three colonies were transitory and were gone by the end of the seventeenth century. Sporadically, other small Protestant groups settled in Latin America and the Caribbean, but all these colonies met with the same result: they all disappeared from the religious and social scene.¹⁴⁰

Protestantism next reappeared in Latin America at the beginning of the nineteenth century, influenced by the philosophical currents of the Enlightenment, Latin America's independence movements, and the European search for new markets to meet the needs of nascent liberal capitalism. Because of famine, overcrowded cities, exploitation due to the Industrial Revolution, and the growing disparity between the classes, Europeans came west to find better economic opportunity and a new life. Orlando Costas summarizes the relationship between the European immigrants and the Protestant missionary movement in these terms:

The incorporation of the modern missionary movement into the world of free enterprise did not occur by accident; it fits into the great liberal project of Europe and North America... the modern missionary movement, as we have

136 José Míguez Bonino, "Fundamental Questions in Ecclesiology," *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 149.

137 Juan Friede, *Los Welser en la conquista de Venezuela* (Madrid, Spain: Editorial Edime 1961), 23-24, 170, 236. Friede tries to demonstrate that the Welsers, and other Lutherans who joined them, were not really interested in evangelizing or promoting the Lutheran faith but in doing business. There is no evidence of any Lutheran congregation being organized in the sixteenth century on Venezuelan soil. For a more detailed account of this initial Lutheran presence and influence, see Pablo Alberto Deiros, *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 1992), 591-594.

138 Jean Crespín, *Los mártires de Río De Janeiro* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1955); and Pablo Alberto Deiros, *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*, 595-596.

139 Ibid., 594-596.

140 Ibid., 597-608. Deiros mentions a Protestant colony in Florida and other settlements in the Caribbean like the Moravians in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

noted, is a product of mercantile expansion. That is, it has obvious links with the platform that was used to launch the liberal project. For that reason we should not be surprised to find very early in modern missionary work key postulates of liberalism such as progress, liberty, and individualism.¹⁴¹

The work of industrialists, entrepreneurs, and missionaries coincided in this expansion of European presence in Latin America.¹⁴² This birth and expansion of capitalism in Latin America enabled church representatives and members from Europe and the United States to travel and to study possibilities for missionary work in Latin America.¹⁴³

Many liberal governments in Latin America welcomed the Protestant missionaries as part of a new phase of Christianity and a new “civilizing” stage¹⁴⁴ for Latin America. The close relationship between the “liberal project” and Protestantism as a civilizing force is seen in these terms:

First, it had to legitimate the liberal project with symbols, doctrinal statements and ecclesial practices. In order to do this, missionary societies organized churches with a representative or congregational form of government wherein liberal democracy could be exercised. They founded schools and religious-education programs based on personal honesty, dedication to work, temperance and moderation, respect for civil authorities, self-control, and avoidance of vices and worldly pleasures. They established seminaries, institutes, or theological faculties where pastors, teachers, and administrators could be trained in accordance with liberal ideology.¹⁴⁵

141 Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 63. An important historical-theological analysis on the relationship between Protestantism and Liberalism in Latin America is found in Carmelo E. Álvarez, Roberto Craig, and José Míguez Bonino, *Protestantismo y liberalismo en América Latina*, 37-56.

142 Pablo Deiros, *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*, 617-638.

143 Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 59-64.

144 The best analysis to this day of this “civilizing” element in the Protestant missionary movement is William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9-14; 187-192. Hutchison sees the ideological coincidences between “Liberals” and “Conservatives” and tries to stress the theological differences. For Hutchison, liberals saw salvation as a gradual progress; for conservatives it was a matter of radical conversion, ‘believe and be saved.’ See *ibid.*, 104-111.

The three predominant models of mission in Latin America are the liberal “Civilizer-evangelizer,” the conservative “Evangelizer-Civilizer,” and the pentecostal “Evangelizer-Sanctifier. The main emphasis in the liberal model is on education; the emphasis of conservatives is evangelism; and pentecostalism emphasizes ethics. All of them interact in Latin America as manifestations of a Protestant tradition that emphasizes “Life in the Spirit” as the integration of liturgy, mission and evangelism. See Carmelo E. Álvarez, “*Los proyectos evangelizadores protestantes en América Latina*,” in *Amanecer* 74 (August-October, 1991), 26-33.

145 Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 64. A solid analysis of this relationship

The largest influx of early Protestant missionaries came from the United States, especially Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Moravians, and Disciples of Christ. Bible societies also played an important role.¹⁴⁶ These missionaries made a strong impact in evangelism, social services, and education.¹⁴⁷

During this original period of expansion three principal challenges arose, stemming from evangelization and mission strategy: the need for cooperation between missions and the resulting importance of adopting a common strategy; questions regarding the level of Latin American participation in the evangelization; and the “Latin Americanization” of the churches. These factors became crucial for the identity and mission of Latin American Protestantism in the twentieth century.

Mainline Protestant boards of missions, through their executives for Latin America and the Caribbean, were the first to deal directly with these challenges by creating the Cooperation Committee on Latin America (CCLA) in 1913.¹⁴⁸ The main task of the CCLA was to coordinate the diverse works of the different missionary organizations.¹⁴⁹

One of the most troubling points for missionary leaders was the excessive competition between groups for occupation of regions for their missions.¹⁵⁰ The mission leaders soon realized that the problem had to be addressed on a wider scope, examined not only as a relationship

between the civilizing element and the role of Protestantism could be found in José Míguez Bonino, “*Cristianismo en América Latina*,” *Orientación* 19 (1) (January to March), 9.

146 Tomás S. Goslin, *Los evangélicos en la América Latina: Siglo XIX los comienzos* (Mexico City: CUPSA-La Aurora, 1956), 16-30. Goslin stresses the importance of the Bible Societies as missionary agencies, and particularly the role of the British Baptist missionary Diego Thomson, the leading figure both in preaching the Gospel and introducing the Bible in Latin America in the early nineteenth century.

147 Pablo Deiros, *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*, 661-694.

148 Joyce Hill, *CCLA History*, unpublished manuscript, March 8, 1984. Ms. Hill was a long-time missionary in Cuba and Brazil and one of the Regional secretaries for the Board for Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church for many years. This manuscript traces the origins of the CCLA to the 1900 Ecumenical Conference on missions in New York City. The European churches discussed and disagreed on whether or not Latin America was a “mission field.” This disagreement led the American churches to seriously consider prioritizing Latin America in their missionary agendas. See Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Caminos de unidad: Itinerario del diálogo ecuménico en América Latina 1916-1991* (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1994), 21-27.

149 John Sinclair, “*Comité de cooperación en la América Latina (CCAL)*,” in *Diccionario de historia de la iglesia*, ed. Wilton M. Nelson (Miami, FL: Editorial Caribe, 1989), 259.

150 Wilton M. Nelson, “*Cincinnati, plan de*,” in *Diccionario de historia de la iglesia*, ed. Wilton M. Nelson 236-237. Nelson traces the so-called “accord” or “comity” to a meeting in Mexico in 1914 sponsored by the newly established CCLA, which originated this strategy in Latin America. The strategic division of national territory among the different denominations was established in order to expedite missionary work. This comity principle was also applied in other parts of the world. See R. Pierce Beaver, *Ecumenical Beginnings in Protestant World Mission: A History of Comity* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), 140-159.

between Latin America and the United States but as a global mission strategy.¹⁵¹

Mainline Protestant Churches Searching for Identity

The first CCLA Congress on Christian Work in Latin America was held in Panama in 1916.¹⁵² The Protestant delegates representing United States mission boards divided up the southern continent among the different denominations, thus establishing a particular presence in each and working out a procedure for the best use of resources to avoid duplicating efforts.¹⁵³

The Panama Congress also improved relations between foreign mission boards and the national churches. Congress participants agreed to cooperate in several areas, including Christian literature, publishing houses, and literacy programs. They also agreed to develop a study guide for Christian education. This conference became the pillar for the initiation of "Religious Pan-Americanism," a kind of Protestant cooperation similar to the Inter-American cooperation movement between the United States and Latin America, which was promoted in a series of subsequent Pan-American conferences.¹⁵⁴

Although participants at the Panama Congress agreed on the importance of cooperation among the churches, many pitfalls had to be overcome before their decisions could be put fully into practice. John Sinclair makes the following observation:

Six years of planning [after Edinburgh 1910] followed to prepare for the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America held in the Canal Zone in 1916. At the conference much of the ecumenical agenda was outlined. Yet one of the reasons for the Protestant presence in Latin America was only partially addressed: the witness of Protestantism to Roman Catholic Christianity. The ecumenical

151 Carmelo E. Álvarez, "*Las circunstancias del congreso: Históricas, socio-políticas, religiosas*," unpublished manuscript on the context in which the CCLA was organized and the Panama Congress of 1916 was held, presented at the CEHILA Symposium on the Panama Congress of 1916, July 1976, Panama City, Panama. See also Carmelo E. Álvarez, *El protestantismo latinoamericano: Entre la crisis y el desafío* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1981).

152 *Christian Work in Latin America, Panama Congress, 1916, vols. I, II, and III* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1917). See Juan Kessler and Wilton M. Nelson, "*Panamá 1916 y su impacto sobre el protestantismo latinoamericano*," *Pastoralia*, 1 (2) (November 1978), 5-21.

153 Joyce Hill, *CCLA History*, 1. See also John Sinclair, "The Congress of Christian Work, Panama, 1916," unpublished manuscript, May 1985, 1-5.

154 The relevant resource for analyzing these movements is: Samuel Guy Inman, *Problems in Pan Americanism* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921). Two perspectives of "Religious Pan-Americanism" are: Harlan Beach, *Rennaisant Latin America* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1916); and Erasmo Braga, *Panamericanismo, aspecto religioso* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1916). These three figures were the leading voices in the Panama Congress of 1916. For a valuable and insightful analysis of the whole movement, the role of the CCLA and the leadership provided by Samuel Guy Inman, Disciples of Christ missionary and first Secretary of the CCLA, see Karla Koll, "Samuel Guy Inman: Venturer in Inter-American Friendship," *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review (UTSQR)*, XLII (3) (1988), 45-66.

pioneers at Panama did not really face the issue culturally and theologically.¹⁵⁵

Zuinglio M. Dias summarizes, from another perspective, the promises and failures of the Panama Congress:

In general, the preoccupation with cooperation and the search for unity dominated the whole spectrum of the Congress. This was main objective and as a result, in the years [that] followed, much effort was put into establishing local committees for cooperation. However, this desire for unity and cooperation which so inspired the Panama congress participants did not prosper. And it could not prosper. The lack of a unified theological education, the wide differences in theological approach between the missions belonging to the established churches and the independent missionary Protestant groups in their countries of origin showed what in Panama they refused to accept: the differences which divide the Protestant churches themselves is of the same order as those which divide Catholics and Protestants.¹⁵⁶

Zuinglio Dias highlights two problems that affected Protestant missionary movements in Latin America from their inception: their strong anti-Catholic sentiment, and Protestant divisions in the United States.

The Panama conference was a step in the right direction: it encouraged cooperation and unity with the Latin American churches. The next decade was crucial for this process as the subsequent regional conferences¹⁵⁷ tried to promote national councils of churches and cooperation among denominations and local congregations.¹⁵⁸

The divisions of the missionary boards did not originate in Latin America but were imported from pluralist United States and Europe. José Míguez Bonino stressed the idea that Latin American Protestantism was a “divisive and divided” movement from its inception.¹⁵⁹ He saw a positive role that the Protestant churches could play as a paradigm of human unity based on the calling to reconciliation, unity, and integration offered by Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁰

Missionary Protestantism within the framework of liberal ideology became the prevailing religious belief in Latin America. This ideology emphasized individualism, freedom for progress, liberal democracy, and success.¹⁶¹ These elements reflect both European Pietism and

155 John Sinclair, “The Unfinished Agenda and Unfulfilled Dream of Panama,” unpublished manuscript, October 10, 1992, 3.

156 Zuinglio M. Dias, “Cooperation and Unity: The Dreams (Unfulfilled) of the Panama Congress in 1916,” unpublished manuscript, n.d., 6-7.

157 CCLA, *Regional Conferences in Latin America* (New York: The Missionary Education Movement, 1917).

158 Arturo Piedra Solano, “Orígenes e importancia del congreso de Panamá,” *Vida y Pensamiento* (16) 2 (November, 1996), 8-16. Solano studies the importance of the Panama Congress and stresses the positive role it played in promoting cooperation and unity.

159 José Míguez Bonino, *Integración humana y unidad cristiana* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, 1969), 57.

160 Ibid., 81-87.

161 The close ideological relationship between Protestantism and liberalism, Protestantism was a progressive, transforming force in the personal, political, and institutional

North American evangelicalism.¹⁶² Samuel Escobar sets forth three major forces that he believes are the Protestant legacy for mission in Latin America and the Caribbean during the twenty-first century: Pietism, the Wesleyan revival, and the pentecostal movement.¹⁶³

During the Montevideo Congress on Social Responsibility in South America in 1925, an attempt was made to analyze the social conditions in Latin America. During the 1916 Panama Congress on Christian Work in Latin America, the missionaries presided and controlled the agenda. In Montevideo, however, a more Latin American perspective was evident within Protestantism. The main topic of conversation was the positive role that Protestant churches could play socially and politically in these nations.¹⁶⁴ According to Samuel Guy Inman, the main architect of Latin Americanization and Secretary of the CCLA, the emphasis was on “social responsibility”:

While at Panama there might have been a question in the minds of some as to the advisability of Protestant Missions working in Latin America, at Montevideo, the Evangelical church felt itself as an established part of the life of South America, an institution which is taken for granted. With its firmer establishment as a national institution, therefore, the big question at Montevideo had shifted to the Evangelical church itself, its own pressing problems, those of the community, and what relationships should be between the South American church and the foreign missionaries and Boards which had given it birth and fostered its life up to the present.¹⁶⁵

In addition to a heightened sense of Latin Americanism, an incipient and timid criticism of imperialism in the region was also voiced in Montevideo, as church leaders moved toward a reassertion of their local cultures and strived to stay focused on the authentically evangelical character of the Christian message. Inman was influenced by the Social Gospel movement and

lives of the people. See Carmelo E. Álvarez, “*Del protestantismo liberal al protestantismo liberador*,” in *Protestantismo y liberalismo en América Latina*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez, Roberto Craig, and José Míguez Bonino, 37-56. Míguez makes the same appeal by stressing that Protestantism will be a renewing force once more if it recaptures the “subversive role” it played in the past within the existing conditions of today. See *ibid.*, 31.

162 *Ibid.*, 55-56. See also Lamberto Schuurman, *Ética política*. Schuurman sees Pietism as a dynamic, renewing force in Europe and suggests that it could play a similar role in Latin America. Another discussion about this possibility appears in David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1990). Martin's text has received many criticisms, particularly from historians and theologians, for his superficial analysis of the circumstances of Latin American and Caribbean Protestantism. For a positive yet realistic theological analysis on this issue from an evangelical and Latin American perspective, see Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 21-42.

163 Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides: Latin America & World Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 100-110.

164 Wilton M. Nelson, “*En busca de un protestantismo latinoamericano: De Montevideo 1925 a La Habana 1929*,” *Pastoralia (1)* 2 (November, 1978), 22-33.

165 Samuel Guy Inman, *Ventures in Inter-American Friendship* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1925), 18-19.

was optimistic because of his liberal and conciliatory approach on inter-American relationships.¹⁶⁶ However, he took a more critical stance against United States' intervention in Mexico and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁶⁷

Inman summarized his vision in this way:

The whole question regarding future ventures in Inter-American friendship may be summoned up thus: shall such ventures be made on the basis of economic determinism or on the basis of the principles of Jesus Christ? The one road leads to division, to despair, to chaos; the other leads to unity, to hope, to victory.¹⁶⁸

Four years later at the Evangelical Congress of Havana the liberal influence was even more evident. "Evangelical solidarity"¹⁶⁹ and the movement toward ecumenical cooperation within the framework of Pan Americanism¹⁷⁰ were the central themes.¹⁷¹ Issues of education, social action, and literature also re-emerged in Havana.¹⁷²

The Havana Congress was the first time Latin American leaders were active participants and affirmed their national and regional identities; the missionaries were in the minority.¹⁷³ Liberal democracy was seen by Latin American Protestant leaders as an answer to the region's social, economic, and political problems.

Samuel Guy Inman made the following remarks on the Havana Congress:

The outstanding result of the Congress was the decision to form a Federation of Spanish American Evangelical churches [including Portugal and Spain].

The proposed Federation will have as one of its major objects the working out of the teachings of Christ to Spanish America. Only then will its religious life

166 Karla Koll, "Samuel Guy Inman: Venturer in Inter-American Friendship," 45-51.

167 Samuel Guy Inman, *Intervention in Mexico* (New York: Association Press, 1919); and Samuel Guy Inman, "Imperialistic America," *Atlantic Monthly*, 134 (1), (July 1924).

168 Ibid., 143.

169 Samuel Guy Inman, *Solidaridad Americana* (Madrid, Spain: Editorial Daniel Gorro, 1924) is a good example of this new mentality.

170 Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Caminos de unidad*, 14-19.

171 Samuel Guy Inman, *Inter-American Conferences 1826-1954: History and Problems* (Washington, DC: University Press of Washington, DC, 1965). Inman traces all the inter-American conferences that attempted to identify the role of Latin American Protestantism and discern the role of the United States in the inter-American dialogue.

172 Wilton M. Nelson, "En busca de un protestantismo latinoamericano: De Montevideo 1925 a La Habana 1929," *Pastoralia* 1 (2) (November 1978), 29-30.

173 One of the key leaders at the Habana Conference was Gonzálo Báez-Camargo, a Mexican ecumenist and prolific poet and writer. Dr. Báez-Camargo made a positive impact on Latin American ecumenism until his death in 1983. See Samuel D. Escobar and Luis D. Salem, ed., *Gonzalo Báez-Camargo: Una vida al descubierto* (Mexico City: CUPSA, n.d.); and Gonzalo Báez Camargo, *Hacia la renovación religiosa en hispanoamérica* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1930). Inman stresses the importance of the Latin American leadership in the Havana Congress; see Samuel Guy Inman, *Evangelicals at Havana* (New York: CCLA, 1929), 145-147.

take on the fullness, the vigor and the expansive force of which it is capable; only then will its leaders cease to be considered mere echoes of foreign missionaries and appear in their real light, as native of their own soil, redeemers of their own culture.¹⁷⁴

The Havana Congress of 1929 was the turning point in Latin American Protestantism.¹⁷⁵ In the first stage in Latin American Protestantism, prior to 1929, the missionary heritage was strongly felt, but in Havana the seeds of a more indigenous Latin American and ecumenical faith were sown.¹⁷⁶ After the Havana Congress, Protestant mission and evangelism began to find a place in Latin American history.¹⁷⁷ Throughout this process, a tension between heritage and destiny could be seen¹⁷⁸ in the struggle to accept the weight of the past while searching for a new model for the future.

Throughout the 1930s the liberal Protestant movement intensified its work, primarily in education for the upper classes, to communicate the Gospel to the Latin American people.¹⁷⁹ However, from 1930-1940 ecumenical work decreased, and as the Second World War escalated, only the youth groups played a significant role in the ecumenical movement.¹⁸⁰

The most significant international ecumenical event of the decade was the Madras (India) Conference from December 12-29, 1938--also known as Tambaram.¹⁸¹ This event was organized by the International Missionary Council and included the first Latin American delegation of distinguished ecumenists as participants. The Latin American message was summarized in this way:

174 Samuel Guy Inman, "Young Churches in Old Lands," *International Review of Missions* 19 (1930), 119.

175 Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Caminos de unidad*, 16-17.

176 Luis E. Odell, "Sesenta y cinco años de ecumenismo en América Latina 1913-1988," *Pasos* 25 (September-October 1989), 6-7.

177 Pablo Deiros, *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*, 720-730.

178 These elements of searching for identity, a new consciousness and the tension between heritage and destiny, became the relevant topics in the different interpretations of Latin American Protestantism in the twentieth century. This dissertation describes these interpretations and how they respond to these pressing issues.

179 Agustín Battle, "El advenimiento del protestantismo a América Latina," in *Historia de la iglesia en América Latina*, ed. Enrique Dussel (Barcelona, Spain: Nova Terra, 1972), 330. On the impact of the liberal ideology in Protestant education, primarily in schools and colleges, see Jether Pereira Ramalho, *Prática educativa e sociedade: Um estudo de sociologia da educacao* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Zahar Editores, 1976), 28-46.

180 Robert C. Mackie, "Brief Report on a Visit to South America from January to March 1944," *World Student Christian Federation*, 1-20; Robert Mackie and Helen Morton, "Latin American Report to the Executive Committee of the World's Students Christian Federation," May 1945, 1-11; Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Caminos de unidad*, 27-33; and Nestor Míguez, "De rosario a Oaxtepec: Los movimientos ecuménicos y la búsqueda de unidad cristiana en América Latina," *CLAI, Oaxtepec* 1978 (San Jose, Costa Rica: CLAI, 1980), 122-131.

181 Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 117-124.

Protestant missions in Latin America rest directly upon the claims of urgent human need and the Christian consciousness of obligation to make disciples of all nations.¹⁸²

The report resulting from this 1938 conference affirmed that Latin America had a role to play in the ecumenical world of the day and showed that Protestantism was a powerful transforming force in Latin America. Protestantism in Latin America continued to be challenged by the intellectual and upper classes to be an enlightened religion. The International Missionary Council was encouraged to implement a series of recommendations enabling these “younger churches” to play a relevant role in the changing societies of Latin America.¹⁸³ The Protestant churches of Latin America were, again, voicing their search for an identity and mission in their region and asserting a place for themselves in the global ecumenical movement.

Alberto Rembao interprets the impact and implications of Tambaram in his book *Mensaje, movimiento y masa*. Rembao identifies a transition from the predominant role of foreign missionaries to the leadership of Latin American and Caribbean pastors and lay leaders. He affirms the 1929 Evangelical Congress of Havana as the turning point for Latin Americans, much like the Madras meeting was the crucial moment for Protestants in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to claim their place in the ecumenical movement.¹⁸⁴

The I Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA), held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1949, opened a new era for the Protestant churches in the region. Besides discussing education and theological formation, participants raised an insistent call for an analysis of the social, economic, and political situations in the region, examined within the framework of the traditional liberal ideology. CELA raised an awareness of the need for a commitment of the churches to a relevant evangelism that took the social problems of the grassroots and poor sectors seriously.¹⁸⁵

The 1949 to 1959 decade was a crucial one for Latin America and the Caribbean. Among other important international events, the People’s Revolution in China closed the doors to Western missionaries, and many were relocated in Latin America.¹⁸⁶ Protestant groups like the pentecostals and evangelicals grew very quickly in Latin America during this decade. The Cuban Revolution became the most important political movement and event of the decade, changing the religious and socio-political scenario in the region.¹⁸⁷

The II Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA) was held in Lima, Peru, in 1961. While affirming that Christ is the hope for Latin America, the Conference highlighted the need for an effective testimony, an attitude of humility in carrying out mission, and sufficient

182 *International Missionary Council*, Madras, India, December 12-29, 1938, Latin American Group (Special Group 2), 2.

183 *Ibid.*, 1-5.

184 Alberto Rembao, *Mensaje, movimiento y masa* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: *La Aurora*, 1939), 32-106.

185 CELA, *El cristianismo evangélico en América Latina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: *La Aurora*, 1949).

186 Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, 78-86, 135.

187 Jean-Pierre Bastián, *Historia del protestantismo en América Latina* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1986), 198-200.

theological background for proclaiming the Gospel. The participants concluded that the work of carrying out God's mission should be done with both personal action and social militancy.¹⁸⁸ They also stated that the churches must increase their presence in national life and in international ecumenical collaboration.¹⁸⁹

Councils and federations of churches from the different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean initiated a group called Evangelical Unity in Latin America (UNELAM) in Río de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1963. The main purpose of this provisional, temporary commission was to promote Christian unity among the churches and ecumenical organizations in order to organize an assembly of churches to establish a Council of Churches.¹⁹⁰ UNELAM was an efficient instrument for dialogue, consultation, and planning.¹⁹¹ When the assembly was convened in Oaxtepec, Mexico, in September of 1978, UNELAM ceased to exist; it took seriously the provisional character of its mission.¹⁹²

Two new ecumenical movements were founded between 1960 and 1970 in Latin American ecumenism: Church and Society (ISAL), and the Evangelical Commission on Christian Education in Latin America (CELADEC). Two youth movements had played important roles during the two previous decades: ULAJE (The Evangelical Union of Latin American Youth), and WSCF (World Student Christian Federation).

A prophetic and critical analysis of the role of the church in Latin America at the time

188 CELA, *Cristo la esperanza para América Latina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Confederación Evangélica del Río de la Plata, 1962).

189 José Míguez Bonino, "Hacia un protestantismo ecuménico: Notas para una evaluación histórica del protestantismo entre la I y la II CELA (1949-1960)" CLAI, Oaxtepec 1978 (San Jose, CLAI, 1980), 65-80. Míguez traces the movement from what he calls "Evangelical Liberalism" to "Neo-orthodoxy." He points out that the search for identity of a Protestantism is both faithful to its mission and is relevant in the changing and conflicting realities of Latin America and its ecumenical vocation.

190 Marcelo Pérez Rivas, "El ecumenismo en América Latina" in Norman Goodall, *El movimiento ecuménico* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1970), 226-228.

191 Orlando E. Costas, *Theology at the Crossroads* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: RODOPI, 1976), 237-240, characterizes UNELAM as a "bridge-builder" that has limitations yet succeeds in engaging the churches in a process of mission and unity.

192 Benjamín Santana, "Oaxtepec, Celebración y Búsqueda," CLAI, Oaxtepec 1978, 133. Rev. Santana, a Methodist pastor from Puerto Rico and president of the organizing Committee of the Assembly of Churches in Oaxtepec, made some remarks about the temporary character of UNELAM in this his inaugural speech.

Juan Marcos Rivera, the Executive Secretary for the Organization of the Assembly of Churches in Oaxtepec 1978, was a key leader of UNELAM. A Disciples missionary in Paraguay and Venezuela, Rivera played a crucial role in organizing a Council of Churches. He patiently helped to design an Assembly that was participatory and democratic. In spite of all the obstacles Rivera succeeded in turning over the work done by UNELAM to CLAI and dissolving UNELAM during that same Assembly. For a personal testimony of this process, see Juan Marcos Rivera, "El rol de la Comisión Organizadora de la Asamblea de Iglesias," unpublished manuscript, 1-5.

influenced both Catholic and Protestant sectors.¹⁹³ In 1964 Richard Shaull,¹⁹⁴ a Presbyterian missionary from the United States working first in Colombia and later in Brazil, wrote the most influential article on ecclesiology ever written in Protestant circles in Latin America, the title of which in itself is a demonstration of its prophetic tenor: "The Church in a New Diaspora."¹⁹⁵ Shaull raised some crucial questions on the role of churches in the Latin American crisis and prophetically envisioned a new era for the church in which God created a new people through the active presence of a community based in Christ's incarnation.¹⁹⁶ Shaull insisted that God's action is manifested in His [sic] people¹⁹⁷ and claimed that the church would rediscover her mission when she accepted God's call to serve in the world as a community for God's reign. When the church lives into this role, a new form of the church arises.¹⁹⁸

This type of renewal was the most promising and crucial element of contemporary theology in Latin America during the 1960s, because the church was being challenged in many ways and from many different perspectives. A church willing to openly discuss its challenges need not fear the consequences and the radical implications of living God's will. Shaull saw the action of the Spirit as a corrective element and constant source of renewal.¹⁹⁹

193 Orlando E. Costas, "Missiology in Contemporary Latin America: A Survey," *Missiology* V (1) (January 1977), 90-114.

194 Richard Shaull wrote a lecture to be delivered at the 1992 VII Theological Week, sponsored by Centro Antonio Valdivieso of Nicaragua. The title of this lecture is very suggestive: "The Evangelization after 500 Years." He develops a typology with three models: the historic-missionary model, the Latin America Protestant model, and the incipient Latin American pentecostal model. His undergirding principle is that the Church is "*reformata, semper reformanda*," always in a new diaspora. These observations are taken from a first draft, thirty-nine page unpublished manuscript signed by Shaull.

195 Rubem Alves, ed., *Richard Shaull: De centro do furacao* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Sagarana Editora, 1985). This book, written by Shaull's former students at the Presbyterian Seminary in Campinas, is a recognition of his struggles, influences, and definite place in the history of Protestant theology in Latin America. His concept of "the form of the Church in a new Diaspora" clearly relates to the new ecclesiology of the "Basic Christian Communities" in Latin America. Leonardo Boff coined the phrase "*eclesiogénesis*" influenced by Teilhard de Chardin, but Shaull's influence is also evident. See José Bittencourt Filho, *Por uma ecclesiologia militante: ISAL como nascedouro de uma nova ecclesiologia para a América Latina* (Sao Bernardo do Campo, Brazil: Instituto Metodista de Ensino Superior, 1988), 52-55; and Leonardo Boff, *Eclogiogenesis: Las comunidades de base reinventan la iglesia*, trans. Juan Carlos Rodríguez (Santander, Spain: Sal Terrae, 1984), 51-76.

196 Richard Shaull, "La forma de la iglesia en la nueva diáspora," *Cuadernos de Marcha* 20 (September, 1969), 69-70.

197 Ibid., 70-74.

198 Ibid., 74-75.

199 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Una iglesia en diáspora: Apuntes para una ecclesiología solidaria* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1991), 87-98. This article emphasizes the importance of ecclesiology on the foundation of ISAL, as well as Shaull's influence and the implications for liberation theology from ecumenical and Protestant perspectives.

God has been calling the church to a new diaspora. The new diaspora is based on a biblical analysis that sees Israel as the people in dispersion searching for a more permanent society while discerning God's calling and judgment in a journey of faith.²⁰⁰ After more than a thousand years, Christendom is in the midst of a crisis and is being challenged to renew the existing forms of the church and make them more authentic for today.²⁰¹ The people of God are seen in the New Testament as the *eclesía* that testified and lived in pilgrimage, a model that could be an effective vision for the church today.²⁰² The church in "*koinonia*" assumes the life in Christ and witnesses and shares a new spirituality as the new people of God.²⁰³

Shaull emphasizes that unless the church accepts this challenge, other sects will present a more attractive and pertinent answer to the daily need of the people. The church in this new diaspora witnesses in concrete solidarity with the struggles and aspirations of God's people and searches for new manifestations of human dignity and life.²⁰⁴ A witnessing church serving in dispersion accepts this new form in order to serve God's purpose in this new diaspora, in history.²⁰⁵

Participants in the III Evangelical Conference (CELA) held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1969 insisted on a new vision of the social reality. In their role as evangelizers, the churches expressed their "*New Awareness*" (emphases mine) in a commitment to freedom and justice. They stated that underdevelopment demands structural change in order to transform the dominant political systems into more "humanizing structures."²⁰⁶ The language of this Conference was new and distinct.²⁰⁷ It articulated a more prophetic and committed position inspired by the progressive elements in the ecumenical movement, particularly the WCC's Church and Society. José Míguez Bonino, quoting Orlando E. Costas, affirms this stronger language:

Orlando E. Costas, in a careful analysis of the Third Latin American Protestant Conference, has spoken of 'a new vision.' He points out that the 'socioanalytic language is more precise and committed.' It speaks of 'a socioeconomic inequality between social classes' and a call for 'a dynamic and decisive participation of all believers, including ministers, in the processes of

200 Ibid., 76.

201 Ibid., 75.

202 Ibid., 77.

203 Ibid.

204 Ibid.

205 Ibid., 78-79.

206 *Deudores al mundo* (Montevideo: UNELAM, 1969).

207 Valdo Galland, "Report on the Third C.E.L.A.," (Geneva: DWME/CICARWS, n.d.), 1-9. Galland writes the report as a representative of the World Council of Churches after a visit to Latin America. He sees the tensions between the more avant-garde ecumenical movements and UNELAM. At the same time, he draws a large picture in which both the positive and negative elements are presented as a challenge for the Protestant churches in the region. An affirmation of the common task in mission and unity between the WCC and the Latin American churches concludes the report. He talks about a "stronger consciousness" and a witness that the churches assume in their Latin American identity.

transformation of the (existing) political systems.’²⁰⁸

The Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), founded in Oaxtepec, Mexico, in 1978, adopted a yet more prophetic position, pursuing more progressive issues like solidarity with the poor, the defense of human rights, liberation, and the role of women in the churches. This Conference resulted in many programs and services that are clearly liberationist in content and praxis. CLAI’s position is that evangelization and mission have a transforming presence and are committed to abolishing existing structures of injustice. CLAI was the fulfillment of the dream sparked during the Havana Congress in 1929: an ecumenical organization searching for identity and mission and promoting unity.²⁰⁹

The Oaxtepec, Mexico, Assembly “Mission and Unity in Latin America” in 1978 has proved to be a historic moment for Latin American Protestant churches. The Assembly was under pressure because of rampant human rights violations in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Latin America.²¹⁰ A war in Central America, dictatorships in South America, extreme poverty throughout Latin America, and the circumstances of the “forgotten sectors” (women, indigenous groups, Afro-Latin American groups, and youth) were concrete and pressing issues.²¹¹ The Assembly responded by addressing the character and role of power structures in society. Ecology, human life, and the need for reconciliation in the churches and in society were considered priorities integral to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The role of the church and its mission is to proclaim God’s reign for the whole of Latin America.²¹²

The decades between 1960 and 1980 were crucial times of crisis and of hope for the Protestant Churches in Latin America.²¹³ The political, economic, social, and religious circumstances in the region are evidences of a new moment, a new *Kairos* in which the churches had an opportunity to become more contextualized and relevant. The Protestant churches--Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, and pentecostal--found a way to respond and be faithful.²¹⁴ Between 1983 and 1992 these groups organized theological consultations and shared their

208 José Míguez Bonino, “A Mirror for the Ecumenical Movement? Ecumenism in Latin America,” in *Voices of Unity: Essays in Honor of Dr. W. A. Visser’t Hooft on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*, ed. Ans J. van der Bent (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), 49-50. For a more detailed analysis of Costas’ interpretation, see Orlando E. Costas, *Theology at the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America*, 86-126.

209 Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Caminos de unidad*, 118-132; and Pablo Alberto Deiros, *Historia del cristianismo en América Latina*, 810-812. See also Rubén Lores, “Some Notes on the New Spirit of Ecumenism in Latin America before and after Oaxtepec,” (mimeographed presentation, NCCC-USA, 1979), 43-46.

210 CLAI, Oaxtepec 1978, 209-216.

211 Ibid., 205-225.

212 Carmelo E. Álvarez, “*El papel de la iglesia en América Latina: Una introducción a la crisis del protestantismo y al desafío misional del continente*,” CLAI, Oaxtepec 1978, 173-192.

213 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Una iglesia en diáspora*, 87-89.

214 Carmelo E. Álvarez, “Latin American Protestantism (1969-1978),” in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, 103-106.

reflections and challenges in books, forums, and seminars.²¹⁵ Dow Kirkpatrick, Methodist executive with the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in the United States, published a book in 1988 with a selection of essays on the “rereading of Protestant faith in Latin America today.” Its topics included sanctification, biblical interpretation, Christology, the priesthood of all believers, the Trinity, the relevancy of Protestant theology to Latin America, and a new ecumenical vision of “the struggle for life.”²¹⁶

The Ecumenical Council of Churches of Cuba organized a consultation in Matanzas, inviting the Protestant denominations that had established the missionary work in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century to reflect on the “Missionary Heritage in Cuba.” This consultation was a time to examine, to ponder, and to engage in honest criticism and constructive dialogue about relationships. It was also a time to heal and to reconcile.²¹⁷

By the end of the century the National Council of Churches in the United States called a missiology consultation in San Jose, Costa Rica, entitled “Hope and Justice for All in the Americas: Discerning God’s Mission.”

If Panama [Panama Congress, 1916] was witness to a monologue by mission boards, in San José [Missiology Consultation, 1998] there was an effort to create dialogue by expanding the circle of interlocutors...In San José we helped one another recognize ourselves as co-participants in God’s mission.²¹⁸

Conclusions

Since its arrival in Latin America and the Caribbean in the early nineteenth century, the liberal missionary movement, represented by the mainline denominations in the United States,

215 This process of organizing consultations was sponsored by the Ecumenical Research Department in San Jose, Costa Rica, through a program called Protestant Traditions in Latin America under the coordination of José Duque and Carmelo E. Álvarez. The process was shared with leaders of the different traditions with the participation of prominent theologians from those traditions. The following books were published as part of the program:

José Duque, ed., *La tradición protestante en la teología latinoamericana, primer intento: Lectura de la tradición Metodista* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1983).

Jorge Pixley, ed., *La mujer en la construcción de la iglesia: Una perspectiva bautista desde América Latina y el Caribe* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1986).

Jorge Pixley, ed., *Hacia una fe evangélica latinoamericanista: Una perspectiva bautista* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1988).

Ashton Jacinto Brooks, ed., *Eclesiología: Presencia Anglicana en la Región Central de América* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1990).

Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia latinoamericana* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI-CEPLA, 1992).

216 Dow Kirkpatrick, ed., *Faith Born in the Struggle for Life: A Rereading of Protestant Faith in Latin America Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1988).

217 Rafael Cepeda, ed., *La herencia misionera en Cuba* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1984).

218 Oscar L. Bolioli, ed., *Hope and Justice for All in the Americas: Discerning God’s Mission* (New York: Friendship Press, 1998), 1-2.

faced a crucial challenge: the search for a regional identity and mission. The pressing task was to affirm a heritage (roots) and look for a promising destiny (future). This ongoing search for meaning, vision, and hope has received a variety of interpretations by theologians and church leaders.

The missions of the liberal Protestant churches in Latin America faced serious obstacles from their inception: the church came from the United States divided, which often made the church a divisive force. The tension between the church's divided history and mission, along with the struggle to create an awareness and relevant responses to the socio-economic, political, and cultural challenges in the conflicting circumstances of Latin America and the Caribbean, complicated relationships between different churches and church organizations. Church leaders became convinced of the necessity for mission and unity as visible signs of a sharing in God's mission in the coming of the kingdom. Ecumenical organizations, regional and national conferences, consultations, and continental assemblies were attempts to promote a conciliar process and to create conditions for a visible manifestation of mission and unity. The founding of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) in 1978 was a concrete institutional expression of a visible ecumenical manifestation of mission and unity. The ecumenical vocation and the missional commitment were intertwined.

The liberal missionary model was influenced by the ideology of an expansive "liberal project" promoted by the United States and Europe. The goals and strategies of businessmen and missionaries coincided in implementing progressive, democratic elements within a larger liberal-democratic project.

The liberal missionary movement had to rise to the challenge of becoming an incarnated Protestantism both viable and relevant in the historical conditions of Latin America and the Caribbean. The church's search for identity and mission led to a view of the church as a new diaspora, the people of God sharing in God's mission.

CHAPTER IV

PENTECOSTALS IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

Ecumenism of the Spirit

The pentecostal movement in Latin America is very diverse and complex. The search for a pentecostal identity and mission can be observed on four levels: first, what do pentecostals mean by an “Ecumenism of the Spirit”? The second level points out the leading voices in this search for identity and mission. The third examines how the process of mission and unity evolved. The fourth distinguishes between the diverse pentecostalisms and their various searches for identity and mission. The main purpose of this chapter is to analyze the role played by leading pentecostal voices in the search for an Ecumenism of the Spirit toward a visible unity among pentecostals and a dialogue with mainline denominations.

The 1961 New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches was a turning point for the ecumenical movement²¹⁹ because both pentecostal and orthodox churches were received as full members of the World Council. Two pentecostal churches joined this unique ecumenical body: the Pentecostal Church of Chile, and the Pentecostal Mission Church of Chile.²²⁰

This process of ecumenical participation by pentecostal churches needs to be analyzed within the larger picture of ecumenical cooperation. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ in the United States had already established close ecumenical partnerships with pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, specifically in Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The churches in these partnerships exchange missionary personnel and engage in mutual collaboration for theological education, development projects, and the sharing of short-term volunteer missionaries and volunteer lay delegations.

These churches played a crucial role in the formation of the Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission (CEPLA) in the 1960s, a regional commission to promote Christian unity between pentecostal churches and with other denominations in Latin America. The pentecostal churches also significantly contributed to the formation of the Latin America Council of Churches (CLAI) a decade later and the continuing recruitment of new members for the Council at each of its General Assemblies.

The context and theological framework for pentecostals’ relationships with other denominations are what many interpreters (including some pentecostals) call an “Ecumenism of the Spirit.” The phrase caught momentum during the organization of the CEPLA in Chile in 1990 and later at the General Assembly of CLAI in Concepción, Chile, in 1995. Several historic churches have taken seriously the importance and relevance of the pentecostal churches by doing research and promoting dialogues, exchanges, and forums.²²¹

219 John A. Mackay, *Ecumenics: The Science of the Church Universal* (Old Tappan, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), 197-198.

220 Marta Palma, “A Pentecostal Church in the Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 37 (2) (April 1985), 223-229.

221 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) started an ecumenical partnership with several Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean: Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in 1963, Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba in 1976, and Christian Mission

What is meant by “Ecumenism of the Spirit”? The late American Methodist theologian and ecumenist Albert C. Outler relates this idea to specific moments in which the Spirit acts in the “fullness of time” as “ecumenical epiphanies,” moments of unexpected divine revelation, loaded with joy and enthusiasm. These “ecumenical epiphanies” are always opportunities to live intensely the promise of an ecumenical dialogue in which the Spirit opens new “frontier spaces of pneumatology.”²²²

José Míguez Bonino introduced the concept during the General Assembly of CLAI in Concepción, 1995:

An Ecumenism of the Spirit, although it does not determine institutional forms nor structural commitments nor formal decisions, dares its participants to not only pray and sing together (which is more than enough) but also to share experiences and explore new ventures.²²³

Ofelia Ortega, a Presbyterian pastor from Cuba and many years in charge of Theological Education at the World Council of Churches, reflects on this concept:

Ecumenism in pentecostalism is permeated with ‘ecumenism of the Spirit’ in which the concept of unity is a faithful reflection of the unity of the Spirit; this includes all God’s creation and its stewardship and integrity, and emerges from the same authentic experience of the Holy Spirit.²²⁴

Two of the most prominent interpreters of contemporary pentecostalism in the world, Walter Hollenweger and the American Wesleyan historian Donald Dayton, had constantly reminded both the pentecostal churches and the ecumenical movement about the importance of the Holy Spirit and ecumenism as the hermeneutical keys to the transformative action of the Spirit in society, history, and nature.²²⁵

The late Bishop Gabriel Vaccaro of the Church of God in Argentina and actively

Church of Nicaragua in the 1980s. The United Church of Christ established an ecumenical partnership with the Pentecostal Church of Chile in the 1980s. The Presbyterian Church (USA) has had relationships with several Pentecostal churches and published to provide a better understanding between Pentecostals and mainline churches. See Benjamín Gutiérrez and Dennis A. Smith, *In the Power of the Spirit: The Pentecostal Challenge to Historic Churches in Latin America* (Louisville, KY: Latin American Center for Pastoral Studies [CELEP]-Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America (AIPRAL) (PC-(USA)/WMD, 1996).

222 Albert C. Outler, “Pneumatology as an Ecumenical Frontier,” in *To the Wind of God’s Spirit*, comp. Emilio Castro (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 19-20.

223 José Míguez Bonino, “*Ecumenismo y unidad de la iglesia*” (Lecture, General Assembly, CLAI, Concepción Chile, 1995), 4 (translation mine).

224 Ofelia Ortega, “Ecumenism of the Spirit,” in *In the Power of the Spirit*, ed. Benjamín F. Gutiérrez and Dennis Smith (Louisville, KY: Latin American Center for Pastoral Studies-Latin American Center for Pastoral Studies-PC(USA)/WMD, 1996), 183.

225 Walter Hollenweger, *El pentecostismo: Historia y doctrina*, trans. Ana S. de Veghaz (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1976). More recently, Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997); and Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press), 1987.

involved in several ecumenical organizations, writes with enthusiasm in these terms:

I have participated in an ecumenism of the Spirit. We believe that the Church is one. We also believe in the responsibility of the prophetic denunciation that the Churches of Christ must do to confront human injustices.²²⁶

At the 1990 EPLA in Chile the final document included the following reference, affirming a commitment:

To continue our contribution in the way of an ecumenism of the Spirit, from the perspective of the poor, to the ecumenical movement and the mission of the Church.²²⁷

All these definitions strive for an ecumenical agenda in which the “Ecumenism of the Spirit” is a concrete commitment to a praxis and life in the Spirit as witnesses in the world²²⁸ and an openness to the constant action of the Spirit calling to newness of life in all its fullness.²²⁹

What have been the implications of this “Ecumenism of the Spirit” for Latin American and Caribbean pentecostals? The late Guillermo Cook, Argentinean missiologist comments:

Christian unity, for pentecostals, is a theological fact based upon the unity of the Trinity, the present and the future hope that drives them, both a factor in and a requirement for the growth of the church and--for an increasing number of perceptive leaders--an imperative in the contemporary era of the divine *kairós*.²³⁰

Ecumenism of the Spirit, as defined here, provides a coherent and integrating dimension that includes the evangelistic fervor, the prophetic voice, a pastoral accompaniment, and the healing ministry in Christian mission based on the action of the Holy Spirit, manifested in experience and expressed in the commitment to promote unity in the church and the world.

Ecumenism of the Spirit: Four Leading Voices

Four leading voices, all pioneers in their own churches and prominent ecumenists, offer perspectives both theologically and practically to that process of mission and unity among pentecostals. All of them founded national churches, participated actively in CLAI and the Word Council of Churches, maintained ecumenical partnerships with United States, Canada, and Europe, and provided ecumenical leadership in their countries: Bishop Enrique Chávez of Chile, Bishop Gabriel Vaccaro of Argentina, Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba’s Executive Secretary Rev. Avelino González, and Presiding Bishop Exeario Sosa of Venezuela.

The late Enrique Chávez was originally an active member of the Methodist Pentecostal Church, known as Jotabeche, and a close collaborator of Presiding Bishop Umaña of the Methodist Pentecostal Church of Chile. In 1946 he decided to leave the Methodist Pentecostal

226 Gabriel Vaccaro, *Así veo al Señor* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Argen Press, 1982), 192.

227 Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia Latinoamericana*, 1992, 254 (translation mine).

228 Ibid., 251-254.

229 Albert C. Outler, “Pneumatology as an Ecumenical Frontier,” 19.

230 Guillermo Cook, “Interchurch Relations: Exclusion, Ecumenism, and the Poor,” in *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America*, ed. Edward L. Cleary and Hannah W. Stewart-Gambino (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 80.

Church because of discrepancies over the handling of finances in the Church. Pastor Chávez established a congregation in the city of Curicó that became the center of a new movement, the Pentecostal Church of Chile, in 1946.²³¹ He became General Superintendent of the Pentecostal Church of Chile in 1947. Later, in 1966, he became General Bishop and remained in that position until his death in 1990.²³²

The Pentecostal Church of Chile became a member of the World Council of Churches during the 1961 New Delhi Assembly. Bishop Chávez admitted that it was no easy task. Many pastors in the Pentecostal Church of Chile had reservations, particularly because other pentecostal churches in Chile were very critical of the World Council. Many churches within the World Council also had reservations about the membership of pentecostal churches from the Third World.²³³

In addition to World Council membership, the Pentecostal Church of Chile wanted to have a fraternal relationship with a pentecostal church in Canada or the United States. Bishop Chávez decided to explore a relationship with the Pentecostal Holiness Church in the United States, but “they were too conservative for us.”²³⁴ The Pentecostal Holiness Church did not like the fact the Pentecostal Church of Chile was a member of the World Council of Churches.²³⁵

The United Church of Christ invited Bishop Chávez to its General Synod in 1982. The atmosphere was good, and “they were very respectful of our positions. They did not understand our doctrinal positions, but tried honestly to understand our pentecostal experience.”²³⁶ The United Church of Christ, and later the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through its Common Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean program, became ecumenical partners with Chávez’ Pentecostal Church of Chile. These relationships have been enhanced by the exchange of delegations, pastors, and missionary personnel.

Bishop Chávez worked all his life in the ecumenical movement. He admired many important figures in the ecumenical circles.²³⁷ He trusted many ecumenical leaders to the point of allowing their active participation in theological education, preaching, the training of Sunday

231 Bishop Enrique Chávez, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, August-November 1983.

232 Carmelo E. Álvarez, Pedro Correa, and Manuel Poblete, *Historia de la iglesia pentecostal de Chile* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial REHUE, n.d.), 21-52. See Manuel Poblete, *Antecedentes para una historia: Iglesia pentecostal de Chile, conferencias anuales de 1984*. This is a short document with three important appendices, the first ever written as a public document about the history of this church.

233 Walter Hollenweger, *El pentecostalismo*, 441-444. In 1985 the author had two long conversations in Pasadena, California, with David du Plessis, who confirmed these observations. See David du Plessis, “*Un pentecostalismo y el movimiento ecuménico*,” in *El espíritu habla a las iglesias*, comp. Theodore Runyon, trans. Alba Barosio (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1978), 95-106.

234 Bishop Enrique Chávez, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, August-November 1983.

235 Ibid.

236 Bishop Enrique Chávez, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, August-November 1983.

237 Irma Palma, ed., *En tierra extraña: Un itinerario del pueblo pentecostal Chileno* (Santiago, Chile: AMERINDIA, 1988), 155-170.

school teachers, and leadership for youth and women's retreats.²³⁸

Bishop Chávez participated, along with other pentecostals from Chile, in the II Latin American Conference in Lima, Perú, 1961, and at the III Latin American Conference in Buenos Aires, where he met with Gabriel Vaccaro of the Church of God in Argentina. Vaccaro and Chávez became good friends and actively promoted the pentecostal cause in ecumenical circles until their deaths.²³⁹ Vaccaro was first Vice President of CLAI for many years, while Chávez was second vice-president for six years. Both were actively involved in UNELAM and the process for the formation of *CLAI*.

Gabriel Vaccaro was converted in the Methodist Church and later was baptized and received baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Evangelical Pentecostal Church.²⁴⁰ Vaccaro was a very reflective person, a lawyer by training and vocation. He attended the Evangelical Faculty of Theology in Buenos Aires, where he met and befriended Julio de Santa Ana, a leading theologian and member of ISAL, and other ecumenical leaders. Early Vaccaro developed a positive attitude toward ecumenical dialogue that afforded some flexibility and openness for a serious theological reflection. Three main convictions were predominant in his theological thinking: first, to be pentecostal means that the charismatic experience allows for tolerance and discernment in the ecumenical dialogue. Second, to be ecumenical means that one takes seriously his/her own tradition. Third, an authentic pentecostal experience opens the door to allow for others to feel the power of the Spirit--the Spirit is not the private property of pentecostals.²⁴¹ Out of these convictions Vaccaro developed the following theological principles:

1. Spirit and structures are always in a tension. That's why the life in the Spirit is so indispensable in the ecumenical process and dialogue.
2. An ecumenical praxis requires a daily and concrete cooperation in joint efforts and coordination; to be ecumenical demands both the charismatic and the programmatic dimensions.
3. The pentecostal experience is nurtured by the deep conviction that the Holy Spirit is autonomous: "the wind blows where it wills;" "it's a surprise factor;" "it opens unknown experiences;" "it guides us to truth and justice."
4. The Holy Spirit is more than magic. It is force, energy, health, healing, and miracle.²⁴²

238 These were the experiences that the author and his wife Raquel shared with the Pentecostal Church of Chile the second semester of 1983 as fraternal workers on behalf of the Disciples Division of Overseas Ministries during a sabbatical year.

239 Bishop Enrique Chávez, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, August-November 1983.

240 Gabriel Vaccaro, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Nueva Dimensión*, n.d., 15-16.

241 Gabriel Vaccaro and the author were friends for more than twenty years. The author preached many times at Vaccaro's invitation in congregations of the Church of God in Argentina. Álvarez and Vaccaro worked together as members of WCC commissions representing their respective churches, as well as serving together for more than fifteen years in CLAI and later in CEPLA until Vaccaro's death in 1995.

242 Gabriel Vaccaro, *Así veo al Señor*, 171-183, 190-193, 225-231. See Gabriel Vaccaro, *Puntos fundamentales del pentecostalismo* (Quito: CLAI, 1992), 12-18, 25-30; and Gabriel Vaccaro, *Identidad pentecostal* (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1990). For two perspectives on ecumenism, see Gabriel Vaccaro, "Reseña histórica del movimiento ecuménico (*Desarrollo, opciones y desafíos*)" and "Aportes del pentecostalismo al movimiento ecuménico," in

Avelino González, founder of the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, was Executive Secretary for many years and an active participant in the Ecumenical Council of Churches. He was a personal and close friend to Dr. José Miller, president for many years of the Jewish Community of Cuba²⁴³ and, as a result, was largely responsible for opening doors for the Jewish Community to become members of the Cuban Council of Churches

González was influenced by Ana Sanders from Canada and Harriet May Kelty from the United States, the first pentecostal missionaries who came to Cuba. He was an Afro-Cuban person who struggled to maintain a balance between his pentecostal experience and his African roots. For González to be both pentecostal and Afro-Cuban was an integral part of his personality.

González was very poor, economically, but was blessed by the caring love of the pentecostal community and later by his involvement in the Cuban Revolution. He did not see a contradiction between being a revolutionary and a pentecostal. The experience in the Spirit gave him a “true prophetic pentecostal mission.”²⁴⁴ González understood that the Gospel and the action of the Spirit in his life gave him an opportunity to be a good citizen.

González played a leading role in the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba and in the ecumenical movement in Cuba and abroad. He was a Christian educator, organizer, and mentor to three generations of pentecostals in Cuba.²⁴⁵ During the last ten years of his life González organized a program of theological education for pentecostals in Nicaragua. This unique program was a joint venture of four churches: the Christian Pentecostal Mission of Nicaragua, the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, the Church of the Brethren, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States.

Exeario Sosa was the primary founder of the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, a national church established in 1957. He played an influential role in Venezuelan pentecostalism, Latin American pentecostalism, and the ecumenical movement.²⁴⁶

These four leading figures made several important contributions to the pentecostal and ecumenical movement in Latin America:

1. These four leaders are pioneer voices of a pentecostal movement committed to the ecumenical dialogue. They were rejected by many conservative pentecostal churches and isolated by traditional mainline denominations.
2. They struggled to maintain a pentecostal identity, although they did not have the theological sophistication or education of other ecumenical leaders.
3. They worked to provide a solid theological education for their national churches.
4. These leaders and their churches were active participants in the formation of the Latin

Pentecostalismo y liberación, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez, 217-233.

243 Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Cuba testimonios y vivencias de un proceso revolucionario* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1989), 127.

244 Ibid., 55-63.

245 Avelino González, “La iglesia cristiana pentecostal de Cuba como misionera y misionada,” in *La herencia misionera en Cuba*, ed. Rafael Cepeda (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1986), 217-221.

246 A more detailed analysis of Sosa’s ministry and influence is included in the sixth chapter of this dissertation, pp. 151-182.

American Council of Churches (CLAI). They paved the way for the organization of CEPLA.

5. Their legacy is clear: a Latin American pentecostal movement faithful to the fundamental principles of a pentecostal identity, profoundly Evangelical (from *Evangel*), deeply committed to an ecumenical vocation and clearly identified with the poor and marginalized. A new generation of pentecostal leaders is making a significant contribution along these same lines, with remarkable success.²⁴⁷

These pioneer leaders united their voices to inspire a movement toward unity among pentecostals in Latin America and led the way to creating the conditions and confidence of these churches in order to challenge these churches to participate actively in the ecumenical movement through the active membership in the WCC and the formation of CLAI.

In Search of Pentecostal Mission and Unity

The CEPLA (Latin American Pentecostal Evangelical Commission) process started in 1960. A national crisis in Chile, the 1960 earthquake, provided the ecumenical opportunity for action by both pentecostal and evangelical churches in Chile. The Evangelical *Ayuda Cristiana Evangelica* (ACE, or Evangelical Christian Aid) was established and became an incentive for two pentecostal churches of Chile to join the World Council of Churches in 1961. Several pentecostal churches and mainline denominations started a program for theological education in Chile known as the Theological Community of Chile.²⁴⁸

The first EPLA (Latin American Pentecostal Encounter) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1971. This conference, "Pentecostal Unity in Latin America," was the starting point for an ongoing process of dialogue among pentecostal leaders of Latin America. Fifteen pentecostal leaders from Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela established this unique opportunity for future encounters, and a special commission was formed to organize future events.

The second EPLA took place just prior to the Assembly of Churches in Oaxtepec, Mexico, 1978. Twenty-two pentecostal churches from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean were present. This pre-Assembly event gave an important impulse and visibility to

247 A number of articles and books written by a new generation of Pentecostal leaders involved in CLAI, WCC, Centro Medellín, *SEPAE*, and other ecumenical organizations illustrates this point: Roger Cabezas, *CLAI: Experiencia de un ecumenismo latinoamericano de base* (Lima, Peru: CLAI, 1982); Gamaliel Lugo, "Base docial del pentecostalismo latinoamericano," *REVISTA CEVEJ* XI (27) (February-September 1989), 10-14; Juan Sepúlveda, "Reflections on the Pentecostal Contribution to the Mission of the Church in Latin America," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992), 93-108; Daniel Godoy, "Pentecostalismo: Signo de unidad," *Pastoral Popular* 227 (April 1993), 30-33; Daniel Farfán, "Somos ecuménicos los pentecostales," *Pastoral Popular* 235 (December 1993), 30-31; Fernando Oshige, *Entrevista con Rev. Orlando Silva*, *Signos de Vida* 3 (1993), 3-5; Juan Sepúlveda, *The Andean Highlands: An Encounter with Two Forms of Christianity* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997); and Bernardo Campos, *De la reforma protestante a la pentecostalidad de la iglesia: Debate sobre el pentecostalismo en América Latina* (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1997).

248 CEPLA: *Proceso de unidad y cooperación pentecostal en América Latina*, 1960-1992 (Maracaibo, Venezuela: CEPLA, 1992), 3.

the pentecostal churches both at the Assembly and in the formation of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI).²⁴⁹ That same year, immediately after the Oaxtepec Assembly, a group of pentecostal leaders from Colombia and Venezuela decided to convene the I Bolivarian Congress. The *Encuentro Pentecostal Bolivariano* was held in Bogotá, Colombia, in March of 1979.²⁵⁰ The theme “Unity and Growth of the Pentecostal People in Latin America” shows the Assembly’s emphasis was on the implications of church growth in the Latin American context and the challenges for pentecostal churches to witness and understand the Latin American reality. The issue of pentecostal identity and unity became central in the discussion groups and the plenary.²⁵¹

In November of 1979, during the second Latin American Congress on Evangelism (II CLADE) in Huampaní, Peru, thirty-one pentecostal leaders representing churches in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela met and entertained a dialogue. The focus of the resulting document was openness to a “new era” of fraternal relationship. Participants recognized the divisions within the body of Christ and the need for a joint testimony to address both personal sins of individuals and structural sins and injustices present in Latin America. This document was the first open and militant expression of such a theology of social concern resulting from any pentecostal gathering in Latin America.²⁵²

In 1982, during the founding of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), another Pentecostal Encounter took place to examine the role and participation of pentecostal churches in CLAI. Three pentecostal leaders were elected in the new board of CLAI and many pentecostal churches joined the Council.²⁵³

In January of 1988 another important dialogue took place, this time in Salvador, Bahía, Brazil, that included official representatives of CLAI and the WCC. They wanted to have a closer relationship, know more about the pentecostal identity, and better understand the place and role of pentecostals as a popular religious movement. Another challenge addressed was the social responsibility of pentecostal churches.²⁵⁴ The next Pentecostal Encounter was held during the first General Assembly of CLAI in Indaiatuba, Brazil, 1988. The meeting concentrated on

249 Roger Cabezas, “*Despertar ecuménico del pentecostalismo latinoamericano*,” in *Jubileo, fiesta del Espíritu: Identidad y misión del pentecostalismo latinoamericano*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo and Manuel Quintero. (Quito, Ecuador: CEPLA-CLAI, 1999), 103.

250 *Comisión de Fraternidad Evangélica Pentecostal Bolivariana*, 28 de julio de 1978, “*Carta de San Cristóbal*,” *Primicia* (January-February 1979), 30.

251 Juan Marcos Rivera, “*Informe del Encuentro Pentecostal Bolivariano*,” mimeographed, April 9, 1979, 1-3.

252 “*Encuentro Pentecostal Latinoamericano, Huampaní, Perú, 26 al 30 de octubre de 1979*,” *Pastoralia* 2 (4-5), 240-241, 1980.

253 Carlos A. Valle, ed., *Semilla de comunión* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: CLAI, 1983), 155-164.

254 For an interesting and balanced evaluation of this encounter, see Eugene L. Stockwell, “Pentecostal Consultation, Salvador, Brazil, 6-9 January, 1988,” *Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC Meeting*, Porto Alegre, Brazil, May 14-21, 1988, Document D, 1-5.

two main issues: “ecumenical vocation” and “prejudices against pentecostals.”²⁵⁵

A series of important national and regional events took place between 1989 and 1990. The first Cuban Pentecostal Encounter was held in February and March of 1989, with the topic “Sharing of Experience of Latin American Pentecostal Encounters and the Challenges to Cuban pentecostals.” The next EPLA encounter in Buenos Aires, 1989, made a clear appeal to pentecostal and historic churches to a “hope in unity, in fellowship and love, in the communion and solidarity that unites us in Christ.”²⁵⁶

In 1990 a group of leaders, sponsored by several ecumenical agencies and convened by the Ecumenical Research Department of Costa Rica (DEI), convened to discuss “pentecostal theology” and to analyze the processes that the churches and people of Latin America were confronting in their daily life and work. The result was a volume of articles on pentecostalism and liberation addressing the following issues: “Pentecostal identity, pentecostal pastoral ministries, the work of the Spirit, to live in the Spirit.”²⁵⁷ The final article in this volume stresses the importance of continuing to contribute in an ecumenism of the Spirit, from the perspective of the poor, to the ecumenical movement and the mission of the Church.”²⁵⁸ CEPLA was founded and organized during the EPLA 1990 in Chile. The newly constituted CEPLA commission designed the process that culminated in the next EPLA 1992 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, as well as tending to the organization, consolidation, and planning of the program.²⁵⁹ Several key issues were raised in Sao Paulo as an agenda for the future of CEPLA in the region, and pentecostals were confronted by two important and pressing issues: “An ecumenism of the Spirit” as a momentum for churches committed to an “ecology of the Spirit.” These terms were not used during the event, but they were implied in the objectives, lectures, sermons, discussion groups, plenary sessions, and Bible studies.²⁶⁰ The future of theological education for pentecostals was another relevant topic during the event.

CEPLA has played an enormous role as a venue for ecumenical dialogue. Roger Cabezas, President of the Faith and Holiness Pentecostal Church of Costa Rica, summarizes the process by which EPLA formed the CEPLA:

1. Investigation and deepening understanding of the origins of the pentecostal faith to characterize the particularity of a pentecostal identity as a catalyst agent for social changes.
2. Examination of the theological heritage from Christianity in the West as an individualistic ethical approach to social problems
3. Christian formation through theological reflection as pivotal.
4. The experience of an “ecumenism of the Spirit” as an integral approach of the Spirit action at the personal level, in the church, for the whole of creation.

255 Roger Cabezas, “*Despertar ecuménico del pentecostalismo latinoamericano*,” 105.

256 “A nuestros queridos hermanos y hermanas pentecostales de América Latina,” *EPLA*, 18 al 23 de abril de 1989, mimeographed.

257 Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia latinoamericana*, 17-250.

258 Ibid., 254, (translation mine).

259 CEPLA: *Proceso de unidad y cooperación pentecostal en América Latina 1960-1992*, 5.

260 Ibid., 12-14.

5. Promotion of a new consciousness of the role of pentecostal churches as servants of the people.
6. A sharing of the pentecostal experiences in daily life from the testimonial perspective and in the dimension of God's reign.
7. Examination of the critical aspects of televangelism and the radio as a possible mutilation of the pentecostal message and commitment.
8. Welcome to other pentecostal churches joining in this ecumenism of the Spirit.
9. Continuation of the process of Latin American *encuentros* (Encounters) to propitiate and contribute to the pentecostal identity, ecumenism, and mission in Latin America.
10. Creation of spaces for critical thinking, dialogue, and challenge to Latin American pentecostalism.
11. Theological reflection on pentecostalism in Latin America, with its unique testimonial-experiential approach.²⁶¹

In 1994 an important consultation, sponsored by the WCC and supported by CLAI concluded with this important paragraph:

In an atmosphere of fraternity and Christian love we have reflected on the pentecostal identity, the spirituality, evangelism, social commitment, participation of women, cooperation and dialogue.²⁶²

The following pentecostal churches from Latin America and the Caribbean have participated in this process of pentecostal unity and mission and are the active participants in CEPLA:

Argentina: Church of God, Pentecostal Church of Argentina, and the Pentecostal Church Mission of Argentina.

Bolivia: the Methodist Pentecostal Church.

Chile: Pentecostal Church Mission of Chile, Pentecostal Church of Chile, Communion of the Brethren Church, Free Pentecostal Missions, Ebenezer Pentecostal Church, Evangelical Church Brethren in Christ, Wesleyan National Church, and the Apostolic Universal Mission.

Colombia: United Pentecostal Church.

Costa Rica: Full Gospel Church of God, Pentecostal Mission Faith and Holiness, and the Evangelical Community the Covenant.

Cuba: Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, Free Evangelical Pentecostal Church, Open Bible, Gethsemane Church, Bethel Evangelical Pentecostal Church, Holiness Pentecostal, and the Apostolic Church.

Ecuador: National Assemblies of God.

Nicaragua: Christian Pentecostal Mission, Great Commission, Church of God in Nicaragua, and the Apostolic Church of the Faith in Jesus Christ.

Venezuela: Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, Light of the World, Second Coming Pentecostal Church, Bethany Pentecostal Church, Christian Pentecostal Church, Apostolic Church of Venezuela, and the Reborn Pentecostal Church of Venezuela.

²⁶¹ Roger Cabezas, "*Despertar ecuménico del pentecostalismo latinoamericano*," 111.

²⁶² *Consulta Pentecostal Latinoamericana, Viviendo en la unidad del Espíritu, Perú, 14-19 de Noviembre de 1994*. See Donald Dayton, "Pentecostal Power," *One World* (March 1988), 10-14; and Felipe Adolf, "Altered Ecumenism," *One World*, (January-February 1995), 4-6.

Uruguay: Reborn Pentecostal Church.²⁶³

The process that started in 1960 as a response to a concrete national crisis in Chile evolved to become a more consistent and constant attempt to create an atmosphere of mutuality and respect, to create a process of discernment to affirm a pentecostal identity, and to promote an integral and holistic evangelism that included an openness to dialogue and ecumenical cooperation.

Pentecostal Churches: Searching for Identity in Latin America and the Caribbean

Agnes Ozman, a simple and devout woman, could never have imagined that the streams of living waters she felt flowing through her in January of 1901 when she received the baptism in the Holy Spirit would mark the beginning of a world wide pentecostal movement.²⁶⁴ The history of the church records other manifestations of the Spirit, from the Montanists of the second century to the revival movements in England and the United States.²⁶⁵ All these movements combined ardent outpourings of the Spirit with evangelizing fervor.

Charles Fox Parham, a self-taught theologian and preacher in Topeka, Kansas, was a mentor and teacher to William J. Seymour in the Bible college he established in Houston, Texas. Parham's background as a Methodist pastor and Holiness preacher made a definite influence in Seymour's thinking and role as a Holiness preacher that led him to become the foremost charismatic leader of the pentecostal movement coming out of the Azusa revival in 1906.²⁶⁶ William J. Seymour was the charismatic leader of the Azusa Street movement²⁶⁷ in Los Angeles, California.²⁶⁸ There is no doubt, according to his biographer, African-American pentecostal historian Rufus G. W. Sanders, that:

In the center of all this excitement was William J. Seymour. By some accounts, this one-eyed black man from Texas was anything but the likely choice for a leader. It was said that Seymour was so meek and plain that he was anything but a dynamic leader.²⁶⁹

Newspapers at the time covered the Movement as a religious scandal. Photographs testify

263 CEPLA: *Proceso de unidad pentecostal en América Latina 1960-1992*, 14-16.

264 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Santidad y compromiso: El riesgo de vivir el evangelio* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1985), 41.

265 Ibid., 11-43.

266 Rufus G. W. Sanders, *William Joseph Seymour 1870-1922: Black Father of the 20th Century Pentecostal Movement* (Sandusky, OH: Alexandria Publications, 2001), 61-73. On the influence and role of Charles Fox Parham in the Pentecostal movement, see Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 18-50.

267 C. M. Robeck, "Azusa Street Revival," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 31-36.

268 H. V. Synan, "Seymour, William Joseph," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess and Gary B. McGee, 779-781. See also J. R. Goff, Jr. "Parham, Charles Fox," in *ibid.*, 660-661.

269 Rufus G. W. Sanders, *William Joseph Seymour 1870-1922: Black Father of the 20th Century Pentecostal Charismatic Movement*, 97.

to the presence of different races and nationalities.²⁷⁰ Only the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) was given greater coverage, and judging by the impact made by the movement of the Spirit in the last ninety years, we can affirm that pentecostalism's influence was by far the greater of the two.²⁷¹ The pentecostal movement was on its way to become an international movement impacting all continents:

Led by William J. Seymour, who was ably assisted by a host of others, the Azusa Street revival boiled away at a red-hot level of spirituality for more than two years before slowly cooling off, and during that time virtually everyone who was anyone within the emerging pentecostal movement felt its impact. For some the experience was first hand. Many traveled hundreds or thousands of miles to attend the meetings so they could see what was going on and hopefully be touched by the Spirit. Others who could not make the journey kept close tabs on the revival through accounts from friends or the published reports issued by the mission. Very quickly the Azusa revival became the Grand Central Station of global pentecostalism.²⁷²

The Azusa Street meetings quickly became known throughout the world as the focal point of the outpouring of God's Spirit that began to sweep multitudes into the experience of baptism in the Holy Ghost.²⁷³

Believers from Europe and Canada made pilgrimages to Azusa Street; they left baptized and committed to spreading this Spirit throughout the world.²⁷⁴ Personal conversions, miracles, and transformations were numerous. Many adventuresome pilgrims, both men and women, were recruited by the Spirit to be missionaries in other latitudes. From Topeka and Azusa the modern pentecostal movement grew so large and influential that within a decade pentecostal phenomena were reported in Asia, Europe, and Latin America.²⁷⁵

The modern pentecostal missionary movement had global dimensions. It became the "Third Force" in the twentieth century Christianity. Many believers from traditional churches made the trip to Los Angeles to know, first hand, of this "explosion of the Spirit."

As the revival was covering North America and experiences were erupting in other parts of the world, one important issue became a central focus of attention and concern: the missionary

270 Two very useful and indispensable sources for understanding Pentecostal roots and its worldwide impact are: Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 18-24; and Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1-87.

271 Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley Publishing House, 1994), 20-42.

272 Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 57.

273 Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of 20th-Century Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 47.

274 Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of 20th-Century Revival Movements in North America*, 1-103.

275 John Thomas Nichol, *Pentecostalism: The Story of the Growth and Development of a Vital New Force in American Protestantism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 40-54.

character and the missiological implications of this new movement. “The Azusa Street revival resulted in a literal world dissemination of the pentecostal message.”²⁷⁶ It gave an urgent calling to proclaim and share the good news of this unique outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This “Great Century” of the modern missionary movement (1814-1915) made an impact on the pentecostal movement and provided the necessary conditions for the expansion and growth in other parts of the world.²⁷⁷ Out of the revivalist experiences of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Great Awakenings in the United States and the revivals in England and Scotland came a Holiness movement that was the precursor of the pentecostal revival of the twentieth century. The pentecostal movement is the climax of both the revivals and the missionary movement.

In North America the pentecostal movement expanded with healing, latter rain, and revivals across the United States and in Canada. From local preachers to renowned national evangelists the pentecostal experience covered the territory.²⁷⁸ The movement tried to accomplish a gigantic task: to proclaim the good news of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and emphasize the urgent call to missionize because the end-time is near. The eschatological impulse was a compelling motivation.²⁷⁹

According to American pentecostal Missiologist L. Grant McLung, Jr.:

The early records of the revival speak of a close and abiding association between the baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues for an enduement of power in Christian witness, a fervent belief in the premillennial return of Christ and His command to evangelize to the uttermost parts of the world...*The History of Pentecostalism cannot be properly understood apart from its missionary vision* (emphasis mine).²⁸⁰

Pentecostalism started as a volunteer missionary movement of called and committed Christians that developed into more organized and institutionalized efforts. Bible institutes became the educational institutions for the training missionaries:

As the pentecostal movement matured, more attention was placed on preparation for the foreign fields, sound financial support, and the necessity of an overall strategy to fulfill the Great Commission.²⁸¹

As this missionary impulse grew, many new missiological and strategic issues confronted the pentecostal churches. This new revival impulse needed careful development of “a theology

276 Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 90.

277 Edward Keith Pousson, “A ‘Great Century’ of Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal and Missions,” *Pneuma* 16 (1) (spring 1994), 81-100. Pousson emphasizes the renewing element in mission as central to a Pentecostal/Charismatic missiology.

278 Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of 20th Century Revival Movements in North America*, 58-95.

279 Andrew M. Lord, “Mission Eschatology: A Framework for Mission in the Spirit,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11 (1997), 111-123.

280 L. Grant McLung, Jr., ed., *Azusa Street and Beyond: Pentecostal Missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1986), 33.

281 Ibid., 36.

of mission” from a pentecostal perspective. McLung suggests that four elements are needed to develop and understand such a theology:

1. An incarnational truth, available and experienced by faith
2. A strong relation of Word and Spirit as a primary guiding principle for the People of God
3. Awareness of an eschatological dimension and tension
4. A sense of being called and empowered for a mission²⁸²

The pentecostal movement in Latin America is part of the great missionary effort that followed the missionary movement of the nineteenth century.²⁸³ In Latin America it started as sporadic renewal movements within the so-called mainline churches: Methodists in Chile, and Baptists and Presbyterian in Brazil.²⁸⁴

Three models of pentecostal missions are predominant in Latin America and the Caribbean in the twentieth century.²⁸⁵

Classical Pentecostalism came from the United States and Europe and brought its own missionary methods. It is economically and structurally dependent on foreign mission boards, and although the pastorate is indigenous, its education and training are clearly based on foreign models.

Indigenous-Creole Pentecostalism (known as “*criollo*” or *creole* in South America) grew out of the local Mainline Protestant churches. With strong roots in popular Catholic culture, it is economically and structurally independent of all foreign missions and has an indigenous pastorate.²⁸⁶

282 Ibid., 47-54. For a solid and coherent perspective on a theology of mission from a Pentecostal perspective, see Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 107-127.

283 Ibid., 3-43.

284 Áureo Bispo Dos Santos, *Origens históricas da pentecostalização do protestantismo brasileiro* (Salvador: Presbiterio do Salvador, 1989), 1-21. See also Émile-G. Léonard, *O iluminismo num protestantismo de constituição recente*, trans. Prócoro Velasques Filho and Lóide Barbosa Velasques (Sao Bernardo, Brazil: *Imprensa Metodista*, 1988), 11-14, 66-118. Léonard traces the roots of the “Brazilian Enlightenment” as a messianic, apocalyptic, and spiritualist movement with multifaceted expressions connecting with indigenous Pentecostalism as popular religiosity.

285 The main emphasis of our typology is on the missionary model and its main characteristics, from a missiological perspective, with reference to worship, testimony, evangelism, and eschatology. The same emphasis is applied to Mainline Protestantism in chapter three.

286 Juan Sepúlveda, “Pentecostal and Liberation Theology: Two Manifestations of the Work of the Holy Spirit for the Renewal of the Church,” in *All Together in One Place*, ed. Harold Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 53. See also Karl-Wilhelm Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America: A Study in the Dynamics of Mission* (London, UK: Associated University Presses, 1999), 17, 70-71.

In 1961 Eugene A. Nida, missionary to Latin America, anthropologist, and Bible translator, developed a typology of Protestant Churches in Latin America in an article entitled “The Indigenous Churches in Latin America.” This article was reprinted as part of a book in 1974.

Protestant churches in Latin America are of four basic types: 1) mission-directed churches, which make no pretense to being indigenous or under local leadership, 2) ‘national front’ churches, in which missions are really mission-directed, but which make use of local persons for leadership, 3) ‘indigenized churches’, in which missions have previously had control but which are now being managed by national leaders in various countries, though often with direct financial support and indirect ‘leverage’ on policy and programming, and 4) fully indigenous churches, in the sense that they have developed exclusively with Latin leadership and funds.²⁸⁷

The “indigenized churches” and the “fully indigenous churches” are the two types that are most helpful in analyzing and understanding the Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. Like in any typology, the elements overlap from one type to another as it helps us to know and interpret the role these churches play and their missionary impact in Latin American and Caribbean societies. A majority of Pentecostal churches have moved from “indigenized churches” to “fully indigenous churches,” becoming what Juan Sepúlveda, Chilean Pentecostal theologian, calls “Creole Pentecostal Churches.”

According to Sepúlveda:

Pentecostalism entered various countries later (and even into Chile and Brazil) as the fruit of missionary activity by different North American Pentecostal churches (and in some exceptional cases, European churches) after these latter had already been highly institutionalized and had their doctrines firmly formulated.

The first group was characterized from the beginning by a financial and missionary autonomy (it had to generate its own type of pastoral ministry, which resulted from an interesting process of interrelation with autochthonous, religio-popular culture). Therefore it is possible to speak of a Creole Pentecostalism, which may well be described-in the good sense of the word-as a form of popular religiosity, that is, as a religious experience strongly rooted in the popular culture and identity. The second group, by its origin, was to manifest a greater financial, cultural and theological dependence on its churches of origin, and therefore, a much weaker rootedness in the autochthonous culture.²⁸⁸

This has been, and still is, a dynamic process, and these categories are only tentative hermeneutical devices for approaching and comprehending the reality of these Pentecostal churches. These churches continue to struggle with serious challenges, including financial support because they do not accept or receive foreign support to pay pastors or develop new congregations. They also continue learning and developing processes in the practices of self-government, guidelines, and polity of governance. In Brazil the indigenization process created

²⁸⁷ Eugene A. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans: With Special Reference to Religious Values and Movements* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974), 137.

²⁸⁸ Juan Sepúlveda, “Reflections on the Pentecostal Contribution to the Mission of the Church in Latin America,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 97.

tensions and conflicts “between missionaries and nationals,” and it was not until foreign missionaries handed over administrative power to national leaders in 1930 that the Assembly of God Church was able to develop and grow in that territory. Any “indigenization process” needs to take seriously the universality of the Christian faith “that makes it impossible for Christianity to become fully identified with any particular culture.”²⁸⁹

The contextualizing dimension of the Gospel is always open to the challenges of any given culture and takes seriously its values and principles, but these challenges are examined, pondered, and affirmed, keeping in mind the ethical dimensions of God’s reign. Respect for a particular culture recognizes and affirms its integrity and dignity and at the same time opens channels of communication for the sharing and nurturing of the universality of the Gospel.

Divine Healing or neopentecostalist churches, the third pentecostal model of mission in this dissertation, emphasize exorcism and prosperity and are the offspring of dissident movements within the churches. Modeled on Messianic patterns, they have an entrepreneurial structure with a weak Latin-American pastorate and are dependent on the charismatic hero-impresario leader.

Classical Pentecostalism

The major missionary efforts of pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean have been sponsored by four North American Churches:

The Assemblies of God

Founded in the United States as a fraternity of churches in 1914 at the old Grand Opera House on Central Avenue in Hot Springs, Arkansas, the Assemblies of God from the very beginning tended toward a Presbyterian form of government, with a general council as a governing body. The emphasis on the restorationist principle of apostolic faith and practice, missionary zeal, and a cooperative effort in the missionary field gave the Assemblies of God its initial impulse and worldwide strategy. As these churches became more centralized and structured, they made Springfield, Missouri, the venue for their headquarters.²⁹⁰

Between 1918 and 1925 the Assemblies of God entered into contact with national churches already established in Canada and England. Supported by good organization, the Assemblies of God expanded rapidly in Europe, Africa, and Latin America.²⁹¹

The Canadian missionary Alice F. Luce founded a pentecostal church in Buenos Aires in 1909 and affiliated it in 1914 with the Assemblies of God in the United States. This phenomenon would repeat itself in many countries. Assemblies of God churches were established in: Peru (1918), Venezuela (1919),²⁹² Cuba (1920), Puerto Rico (1921), El Salvador (1929), Mexico

289 Karl-Wilhelm Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America: A Study in the Dynamics of Mission*, 69-72.

290 Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture*, 113-141.

291 Ibid., 142-163.

292 G. F. Bender came to Caracas, Venezuela, from New York in 1914. Bender stayed briefly in Caracas before returning to the United States and later returning to establish the first Pentecostal congregation in Barquisimeto in 1919. Rev. Irvin Olson, a missionary affiliated with

(1931), Guatemala (1936), Honduras (1937), Chile (1941), Colombia (1942), Costa Rica (1942), Uruguay (1944), Paraguay (1945), Bolivia (1946), Ecuador (1962), and Panama (1967).²⁹³

The extensive presence of Assemblies of God churches has been supported by the programs and publications of *Editorial Vida* (Gospel Publishing House in English), the major publishing house for pentecostal literature in Latin America and the Caribbean to this day, and by the *Pentecostal Evangel*, a missionary magazine. Besides Bible institutes, private elementary and high schools, and some universities, the Assemblies of God churches also sponsor radio programs and magazines in Spanish and Portuguese.

The Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)

The Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) was initially part of the Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century. In 1907 this Church began missionary work in the English-speaking Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago). By 1910 missionaries had started work in Panama and afterwards began in other countries: Costa Rica (1935), Mexico (1946), Peru (1962), Puerto Rico (1966), and Brazil (1970).²⁹⁴

The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)

Founded as the “Christian Union,” another offspring of the Holiness Movement, the Church of God embraced the pentecostal movement with intense missionary fervor. The first missionaries left the United States in 1910 for the Bahamas. Later, they established themselves in Mexico (1932); Haiti (1933); Guatemala (1934); Costa Rica and Panama (1935); Argentina (1940); Cuba and Ecuador (1944); Uruguay (1945); Peru (1949); Nicaragua and Honduras (1950); Brazil (1951); Chile, Colombia, and Paraguay (1954); Bolivia (1960); and Venezuela (1969).²⁹⁵

Theological education is an important part of the work of this Church. This emphasis has led the Church of God to establish Bible colleges and theological schools with highly qualified professors who are graduates of prestigious universities and seminaries.²⁹⁶

the Assemblies of God since 1935, came to Venezuela in 1940 and founded a congregation in Catia, a suburban area of Caracas, in 1942. He convinced Federico Bender to join the Assemblies of God just after the first Assemblies of God Convention in August of 1947.

293 Floyd C. Woodworth, “*Asambleas de Dios en América Latina*,” in *Diccionario de historia de la iglesia*, ed. Wilton M. Nelson (Miami, FL: *Editorial Caribe*, 1989), 87-89. Luisa Jeter de Walker has written a comprehensive history of the Assemblies of God in Latin America and the Caribbean. She stresses the role of the missionaries as the main protagonists of the missionary enterprise and minimizes the role of the nationals in each country, but she also offers valuable information on the origins of this important movement in those countries. See Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, 3 vols. (Deerfield, FL: *Editorial Vida*, 1990-1996).

294 Gabriel Vaccaro and Wilton M. Nelson, “*Iglesias de Dios en América Latina*,” in *Diccionario de historia de la iglesia*, ed. Wilton M. Nelson (Miami, FL: *Editorial Caribe*, 1989), 559-560.

295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

The Foursquare Gospel Church

The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel originated in Los Angeles, California, in 1921,²⁹⁷ sparked by a fiery and charismatic leader. This Church derives its name from the four faced figures from the Bible (Ezekiel 1) that its founder Aimee Semple McPherson interpreted as Christological figures: Jesus Christ saves, baptizes, heals and will return.

The missionary work of this Church in Latin America began in Panama (1928), Bolivia (1929), Puerto Rico (1930), Chile (1940), Colombia and Mexico (1943), Guatemala (1945), Brazil (1946), Venezuela (1952), Costa Rica and Nicaragua (1954), Ecuador (1956), Argentina (1959), and El Salvador, Jamaica, and Haiti (1971).

The Foursquare Gospel Church has active women's and youth organizations. It places particular emphasis on theological education, especially in Panama and Ecuador. Its inspiration by the ministry of a founder like Aimee Semple McPherson²⁹⁸ is positive sign for the future of active participation by women in pastoral ministry. Many women missionaries have exercised a predominant role in the life of this organization in Latin America.²⁹⁹

*Indigenous-Creole Pentecostalism*³⁰⁰

Between 1907 and 1909 in Valparaiso, Chile, missionary doctor Willis C. Hoover³⁰¹

297 On the theological implications of the "four-fold pattern," see Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 21-23.

298 A definitive and very valuable biography is Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 190-193.

299 W. E. Warner, "International Church of the Foursquare Gospel," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry Stout (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 578.

300 Manuel Gaxiola in his valuable typology of Latin American Pentecostalism calls this group "Autochthonous Pentecostal Churches" and makes a distinction by separating the "Oneness Churches" into a distinct category. The only difference between these two categories is doctrinal. Sociologically and liturgically they have more or less the same principles and reflect the same social status among poor people in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. See Manuel Gaxiola, "Latin American Pentecostalism: A Mosaic within a Mosaic," *Pneuma* 13 (2) (fall 1991), 107-129. Bernardo Campos calls Classical Pentecostalism "International," and he refers to Indigenous or Creole Pentecostalism as "national with intermixture of roots." See Bernardo Campos, *De la reforma protestante a la pentecostalidad de la iglesia* (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1997), 96. See Carmelo E. Álvarez, "Los pentecostales en América Latina ¿Ecuménicos o evangélicos?" *Kairos* 1 (December 1988), 9-14.

301 The most important source for the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement in Chile is still Rev. W. C. Hoover, *Historia del avivamiento pentecostal en Chile* (a private edition by the *Comunidad Teológica de Chile*, n.d.). For the important role played by Hoover as a Methodist "self supporting missionary" sent by Bishop William Taylor, see David Bundy, "Unintended Consequences: The Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society and the Beginnings of Pentecostalism in Norway and Chile," *Missiology* XXXVII (2) (April 1999), 211-229. See also Luis Orellana Urtubia, *Breve Historia del Movimiento Pentecostal Chileno en su Primera Etapa (1909-1932)*, licenciature thesis, *Comunidad Teológica de Chile*, 1989.

began a revival campaign in the Methodist Episcopal Church. All-night vigils, Bible studies, and prayer groups energized a movement that would soon reach to the capital city of Santiago. Soon the movement provoked a schism, as congregations in Valparaíso and Santiago left the denomination to form the Methodist Pentecostal Church. In the following decades the pentecostal movement in Chile sustained growth, suffered schisms, and formed new pentecostal churches.³⁰²

With Hoover at the helm, the revival spread throughout Chile at a dizzying pace. Hoover mobilized believers for street evangelism, organizing them into squads of militants who shared songs, Bible readings, open-air preaching, and personal testimony. The purpose of these efforts was to animate the poor and marginalized with a simple but demanding faith.³⁰³

A similar movement, which began in Brazil in 1909, became known as the “Great Revival.” Three foreigners were the protagonists. Luigi Francescon, an Italian immigrant to the United States, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the mission of William H. Durham, pentecostal pastor in Chicago. Wanting to preach to his own people about his new experience in the Spirit, Francescon founded churches among Italian immigrants in Pennsylvania, Missouri and California. In 1909, according to Francescon’s own testimony,³⁰⁴ a call from the Spirit summoned him to South America.³⁰⁵ He started work in Argentina first among Italian immigrants and later moved to São Paulo, Brazil.³⁰⁶

Francescon organized congregations of Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, where he fostered social work between the immigrants and established contacts with Presbyterian churches.³⁰⁷ He caused a great scandal when, in the midst of his vibrant preaching, he began to speak in tongues. He was expelled, but not before he convinced some Presbyterians that his message and experience were authentic. Thus, Francesco decided to found his own congregation, the Christian Congregation of Brazil. Francesco adapted Presbyterian ecclesial structures for his new church, as other pentecostals had done with other historic churches. This flexibility demonstrates the lack of a distinct ecclesiology among pentecostal churches. Instead of focusing on becoming an institutional church, they concentrate on building a movement based

302 Humberto Muñoz, *Nuestros hermanos evangélicos* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Nueva Universidad, 1974), 217-252. Narciso Sepúlveda, “Breve síntesis histórica del movimiento pentecostal en Chile,” in *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia latinoamericana*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1992), 37-45.

303 Juan Sepúlveda, “El nacimiento y desarrollo de las iglesias evangélicas,” in *Historia del pueblo de Dios en Chile: La evolución del cristianismo desde la perspectiva de los pobres*, Mariano Salinas (Santiago, Chile: CEHILA-REHUE, 1987), 247-277.

304 *The Autobiography of Louis Francescon*, untitled (privately published manuscript, June 1951).

305 Walter Hollenweger, *El pentecostalismo: Historia y doctrina*, trans. Ana S. de Veghaz (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1976), 131-142.

306 J. Coletti, “Francescon, Luigi (1866-1964),” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 315.

307 José Rubens Jardimino, *As religioes do espírito* (São Paulo, Brazil: Institute for Religious Studies, 1994), 37-39.

on the pentecostal experience.³⁰⁸

The other two foreigners were Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg, Swedish immigrants with a Baptist background, who had met Charles Durham in Chicago. Having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they waited prayerfully for their future ministry to be revealed.³⁰⁹ In South Bend, Indiana, near Chicago, they received a prophecy telling them that they should go to Belém do Pará. They went to a public library to consult geography books and found that this was the name of a state in the Amazon region of Brazil. Pentecostals all over the world followed this “geography of the Spirit” as a confirmation of God’s purpose and revelation. Berg and Vingren were no exception:

Like so many pentecostals of that era, they were motivated by revelations received directly from God. Arriving in the city of Belém, in the state of Pará, they were sheltered in the basement of a Baptist church whose pastor was also of Swedish origin. Some months later, when they learned Portuguese, they speeded a division in the church. Thus, they founded the ‘Mission of Apostolic Faith’ with nineteen members. This name was changed after 1914, as it was in the United States, to ‘Assemblies of God.’³¹⁰

Despite the foreign roots of their founders, Francescon’s Christian Congregation of Brazil, Vingren and Berg’s Assemblies of God, and Hoover’s Pentecostal Methodist Church became the first to attempt to develop “indigenized churches” in South America that were less dependent on foreign financial support and more self-supporting and identified with the national culture.³¹¹

In 1918 Vingren and Berg officially registered the “Assembléia de Deus” (The Assemblies of God) with the Brazilian government and immediately promoted the active participation of Brazilian pastors in the leadership of the church as evangelists and regional coordinators. Through their efforts the Assembly of God of Brazil consolidated its work in the 21 states of Brazil in less than two decades. The first National Convention was held in 1930, with 160 congregations and 16,000 members. In 1935 the first missionaries from the United States arrived. From the very beginning some tensions existed between the Swedish missionaries and the Assembly of God of Brazil, particularly because of the different approaches in missionary accompaniment. While encouraging Brazilians to become missionaries in other Latin

308 Walter Hollenweger, *El pentecostalismo*, 425-430.

309 José Rubens Jardimino, *As religioes do espírito*, 33-36.

310 Leonildo Silveira Campos, “Why Historic Churches Are Declining and Pentecostal Churches Are Growing in Brazil: A Sociological Perspective,” in *In the Power of the Spirit: The Pentecostal Challenge to Historic Churches in Latin America*, ed. Benjamín Gutiérrez and Dennis A. Smith, 73; and Ingo Wulfhorst, “O pentecostalismo no Brasil,” *Estudos teológicos*, 35 (1) (1995), 3-12.

311 A typical phenomenon in Pentecostal missionary endeavors is the quick transformation of any missionary organization into an indigenous church. A good example is South Africa, according to Allan Anderson, where: “Pentecostalism’s roots in Afro-American religion made the transplanting of its central tenets in Africa more easily assimilated, not always to the satisfaction of Western Pentecostal missionaries.” Allan Anderson, *Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: UNISA, 1992), 31.

American countries, relying on their own financial resources, the Swedish missionaries continued to exercise some control of many domestic aspects of the Assemblies of God in Brazil.³¹²

Over the years the Assemblies of God of Brazil continue having United States and Swedish missionaries. The leadership and presence of United States missionaries has been predominant since 1935, but the practices and strategies in the life and work of the denomination respond both to national leadership and national challenges, including social work.³¹³

The Assemblies of God in Brazil grew to become the largest pentecostal church in the country, maintaining its relationship with the Assemblies of God in the United States but becoming increasingly autonomous and autochthonous over the years, even establishing its own printing press and evangelistic effort.

Two Caribbean churches are good examples of Indigenous-Creole Pentecostal churches. The first is the Pentecostal Church of God of Puerto Rico, founded by Pastor Juan L. Lugo, who was associated with the Azusa Street movement and with the nucleus of Hispanic pentecostal churches in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Lugo felt a great desire to take the pentecostal revival to his native island of Puerto Rico. He received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Hawaii, moved to California, and decided that the Spirit was calling him to his beloved country.³¹⁴ In Puerto Rico, Lugo preached in the city of Ponce in the southern part of the island. The Pentecostal Church of God was briefly associated with the Assemblies of God but soon declared its independence. It became a powerful missionary movement, with direct missionary work in more than thirty countries.³¹⁵ The Pentecostal Church of God of Puerto Rico opted to become an indigenous church in its approach to mission. The main emphases were tithing as a principle of stewardship and self-propagation by planting new congregations. In 1917, just one year after starting work in Puerto Rico, they expanded into the Dominican Republic on their own initiative, sending Salomón Feliciano, a close collaborator of Juan L. Lugo, as the first missionary to that country. This emphasis on mission was and has been their strategy for decades, resulting in new Pentecostal Church of God congregations in Central and South America. They also established congregations in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and San Diego in the United States. Today

312 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha. Reseña de las Asambleas de Dios en Argentina, Brasil, Venezuela, Ecuador, República Dominicana y Cuba*, Vol. III, (Deerfield, FL: Editorial Vida, 1996, 28-49.

313 Ibid., 65-69.

314 Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic*, 90; Raymond Mercado Matos, *Breve historia de la iglesia pentecostal en Puerto Rico* (Bayamón, Puerto Rico: n. p., 1985), 25-29. A more recent and detailed account of these initial events and the origins of indigenous Pentecostalism in Puerto Rico is found in Rubén Pérez Torres, *Poder desde lo alto: Historia y contribuciones del pentecostalismo en Puerto Rico y en los Estados Unidos* (Hato Rey, Puerto Rico: Editorial Mirec, 1997), 132-165.

315 Samuel Díaz, *La nave pentecostal* (Deerfield, FL: Editorial Vida, 1995), 22-49. Díaz makes a clear connection between Juan L. Lugo and the Assemblies of God, demonstrating that Lugo was ordained in 1916 by the Assemblies of God. Díaz traces the tension and polemics involved in the formation of the Pentecostal Church of God in Puerto Rico, offering a series of documents in the Appendix of his book, 107ff.

the Department of Missions of the Pentecostal Church of God of Puerto Rico commissions missionaries to Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, supported by the churches in Puerto Rico.

Another important church in the Caribbean is the Evangelical Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, founded by Francisco Rodríguez from Puerto Rico, Ana Sanders from Canada, and Harriet May Kelty of the United States. These missionaries were sent by the Assemblies of God to establish the Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Cuba. A group of Evangelical Pentecostal Church members later formed the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba.³¹⁶

In 1956, the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba decided that it was time to affirm its autonomy and assert its Cuban roots. Avelino González³¹⁷ Luis M. Ortiz,³¹⁸ and later Francisco Martínez.³¹⁹ became the leaders of that new Church. For many years the Church of Cuba has had formal ties with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These ecumenical relations started at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya, and continue to this day. Today the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba participates actively in the Caribbean Conference of Churches, the Latin American Council of Churches and the Cuban Council of Churches. It continues to grow, primarily among the Afro-Cuban population in the eastern part of the island.

The Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba has demonstrated the capacity to articulate a missionary model that takes seriously the self-support, self-government, and self-propagation principles of indigenous churches in many parts of the world. The majority of its pastors are of Afro-Cuban descent, and very few have gone into political exile during the 46 years of the Cuban revolution. Many of their theological students, both men and women, study at the Evangelical Seminary of Matanzas, Cuba, a Union Seminary with a clear ecumenical option, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center of Havana, a center for ecumenical formation in Cuba. In 2004 Rev. Rhode González, an ordained pastor of the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba and one of the pastors in a Havana congregation, was elected the first woman Pentecostal and Afro-Cuban person to be elected president of the Cuban Council of Churches. Her leadership is recognized both among churches in Cuba (including the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish Community) and internationally, as an ecumenical leader in the Caribbean.

316 For an updated and accurate analysis of the origins of Pentecostalism in Cuba, see Daisy Fariñas Gutiérrez, “*El pentecostalismo en Cuba*,” in *Carismatismo en Cuba*, ed. Reinerio Arce and Manuel Quintero (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1997), 13.

317 An important source of information is Avelino González, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, in Carmelo E. Álvarez ed., *Cuba testimonios y vivencias de un proceso revolucionario*, 55-65.

318 Luis M. Ortiz established his own World Missionary Movement with a strong anti-ecumenical and anti-communist stance, rejecting any connection with the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba.

319 On the importance of Francisco Martínez, his progressive political and theological thinking, and his ecumenical relations, see David Fonseca, “*Francisco Martínez Luis: Paradigma de la responsabilidad social*,” mimeographed paper, n. d.

Divine Healing and Prosperity

A new offshoot of pentecostalism concerned with divine healing has more recently emerged in the “religious supermarket.” José Bittencourt Filho,³²⁰ a sociologist of religion from Brazil, has characterized this kind of pentecostalism as an alternative to Indigenous-Creole Pentecostalism. Exorcism and prosperity are its central elements. Energetic, charismatic leaders exhort huge gatherings and provide continuous worship services in old cinemas and auditoriums, open buildings in which the public meetings are conceived more as public spectacles than as community life and worship. The hymns, sermons, and exhortations are a kind of therapy for the suffering masses. When the leader comes on stage, enough enthusiasm has already been created to generate an almost hysterical explosion of emotion in the congregation.³²¹ Observers have noted that the flexible bond that results from these shared emotions demands little personal commitment and is a welcome alternative to the pain, needs, and conflicts that participants must confront daily. Faced with daily crises, people prefer a moment of ecstasy with this vibrant and untamed Jesus to the silence and existential vacuum of daily life³²²

From a doctrinal point of view, some prosperity pentecostals uses the Bible as a fetish and a source of magical phrases as they perform exorcisms and divine healings. Rarely is the Bible actually studied, since the central acts of faith are healing and liberation.³²³

It is a pentecostalism that emphasizes exorcism; the pastor becomes a moral agent who brings prosperity and stability. These pastors enjoy Messianic authority that extends to the economic realm. This kind of pentecostalism offers economic benefits to the pastors, incorporating them into the religious marketplace and converting the church into a commercial venture.³²⁴ Evangelists of this kind in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela are known to own large properties in England, the United States, and Europe.³²⁵

320 José Bittencourt Filho, “*Remédio amargo*,” *Tempo e presença* 259 13 (1985), 31-34.

321 As a participant-observer in July of 1995, the author participated in a worship service at the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Bishop Edir Macedo, the most charismatic and Messianic figure of the divine healers or prosperity preachers, preached that night to a packed auditorium for more than two hours.

322 José Rubens Jardimino, *Sindicato dos mágicos: Um estudo de caso da eclesiologia neopentecostal* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Center for Pastoral and Ecclesiastical Studies, 1993), 11-48.

323 For a good analysis of some of the doctrinal tenets of this movement, particularly the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God founded by Bishop Macedo, see Oneide Bobsin, “*Teología da prosperidade ou estratégia de sobrevivência: Estudo exploratório*,” *Estudos teológicos* 35 (1) (1995), 21-38. See also Antonio Gouvêa Mendonça, “*Sindicato de mágicos: Pentecostalismo e cura divina (Desafio histórico para as igrejas)*,” in *Estudos da religião* VI (8) (October 1992), 49-59.

324 José Bittencourt Filho, “*Novos Grupos independentes de caráter pentecostal e seus projetos de evangelização: Notas ecumênicas*,” Sao Paulo, Brazil, World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) (24/3/92), 16-20. See also José Bittencourt Filho, “*Uma terapia religiosa na cidade*,” *Tempo e presença* 225 (November 1987), 21-22. Bittencourt sees this kind of movement as a “sacred space” in the midst of the turmoil of the city.

325 A very critical and insightful analysis, stressing that divine healing and prosperity neopentecostalism is a globalized and postmodern phenomenon, is Martín Ocaña Flores,

The pentecostal churches in Latin America display a marked emphasis on the worship service.³²⁶ The life of the community is embodied in worship, which is a celebration of life in the midst of suffering and pain. Worship is the context for testimony and sharing faith stories. pentecostal testimonies express gratitude and tell of a testing of faith. The responsibility to testify begins at the moment of conversion³²⁷ and continues throughout life through witness first to one's own pre-conversion circumstances and then proceeding to the miracle of salvation.³²⁸

Pentecostal churches believe that their most fundamental task is to evangelize. They must announce, proclaim, and call people to newness of life in the Spirit. For pentecostals, church is mission--the Mission of God.³²⁹ This missiological dimension exists in creative tension with the eschatological dimension--a tension between the old and new, between present joy and the expectation of joy to come.³³⁰ The believer lives in the expectation of the miraculous.

These pentecostal churches continue to struggle amidst divisions, doctrinal confrontations and misunderstandings by other Christian confessions, and criticism from the Latin American and Caribbean societies in which they live. During the EPLA Encounter of 1998 in Havana, Cuba, they expressed their conviction and hope, affirming that in discerning God's calling to the pentecostal churches they find a continent that is suffering but "impregnated with hopes."³³¹

The pentecostal movement that started as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Topeka (1901) and Azusa Street in Los Angeles (1906) became a global missionary movement that spread into all continents. The movement in Latin America and the Caribbean began as a foreign missionary movement, but it soon transformed into an indigenous, autonomous movement of independent and national churches. Today the movement is also expressed by divine healing churches led by a messianic-hero figure in which exorcism and prosperity theology dominate. These so-called "neopentecostal" churches like the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil are organized as religious transnational enterprises.

"*Teología de la prosperidad, ¿El sendero del éxito para los excluidos?*" *Signos de Vida 11* (March 1999), 3-5.

326 Cecilia Castillo, "Pentecostal Worship: A Healing Community," in *Seeds of Living Hope: Reflections and Challenges in the Churches in the Road to Concepción*, ed. Manuel Quintero (Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1994), 83-94.

327 Carmelo E. Álvarez, "*Lo popular: Clave hermenéutica del movimiento pentecostal*," in *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia latinoamericana*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI-CEPLA, 1992), 95-98.

328 Manuel Canales, Samuel Palma, and Hugo Villela, *En tierra extraña II* (Santiago, Chile: AMERINDIA Sepade, 1991).

329 Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen, ed., *Called and Empowered: Global Mission In Pentecostal Perspective* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 44-58, 67-97, 203-224, 242-258, 285-298.

330 Samuel Soliván, "Hispanic Pentecostal Worship," in *¡Alabadle! Hispanic Christian Worship*, ed. Justo L. González (Nashville, KY: Abingdon Press, 1996), 43-56.

331 Manuel Quintero, ed., *Jubileo, fiesta del Espíritu* (Quito, Ecuador: CEPLA-CLAI, 1999), 194.

Conclusions

The pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean that initiated a journey in search of their identity and mission during the first two decades of the twentieth century assumed an ecumenical vocation expressed as an Ecumenism of the Spirit. This Ecumenism of the Spirit was promoted through the active participation of key leaders in the ecumenical movement both regionally and internationally. It moved into specific partnerships of ecumenical cooperation with mainline denominations. This Ecumenism of the Spirit affirms that Christian mission and unity requires openness to the action of the Holy Spirit as an agent of that unity in the struggle for justice, hope, and peace.

The search for mission and unity was explored in a series of national and regional encounters and a commission (CEPLA) to coordinate gatherings, design educational programs, and develop strategies for social action and evangelism. CEPLA was intended as a venue for dialogue as part of a process to enhance denominational partnership among pentecostal churches and with mainline denominations.

The Azusa revival in Los Angeles, California, provided the initial spiritual force that transformed into a movement of the Spirit of global dimensions. The pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean are direct inheritors of this movement of the Spirit. The missionary expansion and growth that impacted other parts of the world imparted a missionary impulse and the urgency to proclaim the good news of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit to Latin American and Caribbean pentecostals. A very diverse and complex movement of pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean accepted the challenge to become more indigenous and autonomous. An important sector of that movement, known as neopentecostalism (the divine healing or prosperity model) has been transformed into a “religious supermarket.” All three predominant models of pentecostal mission in Latin America and the Caribbean have tried to respond to the cry of the oppressed and the poor sectors of society. In their attempt they also accompanied immigrants from Europe and displaced persons in a diaspora that spanned from the Caribbean to other countries in Latin America and Hawaii.

Classical Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean are very reluctant, with very few exceptions, to talk about ecumenism. They have reacted negatively to any connection or contact with the ecumenical movement, particularly with the World Council of Churches and the Latin American Council of Churches. Mission and unity is envisioned in this Classical Pentecostal model of mission more as interdenominational cooperation for specific purposes, mainly national crises and emergencies or the defense and promotion of moral and spiritual values in Latin American societies, addressing corruption in governmental structures and prostitution as social malaise. Their voices have been heard in political situations in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Brazil, Venezuela, and other countries in the past two decades, breaking a silence kept for decades in the region.

Some leaders of these Classical Pentecostal churches have participated publicly as candidates for elected positions and as ministerial positions in government, but they have done so as individuals, never making a connection between their Pentecostal identity and their roles played in public life.

Classical Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean have had a very limited initiative or acceptance of an ecumenical dialogue with Mainline churches. Most of the leaders from these churches who join ecumenical consultations and seminars make the

clarification that they are not officially representing their denominations. They often ask to remain anonymous to avoid retaliation from their leaders.

Classical Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, in searching for their own identity and mission, have concentrated more on projects of social assistance among the poor and in social services (day care centers, schools) to middle class sectors. Some churches like the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) established theological seminaries, Bible institutes, and universities and formed networks on Christian education, theological education, and youth programs, trying to integrate a more regional strategy in these areas within the denomination. However, the leadership in the United States headquarters of the Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) continues to play decisive roles and provided, particularly in the visible presence of United States missionaries and financial dependence throughout the Latin American and Caribbean countries. These Classical Pentecostal churches actively continue their evangelistic fervor and planting churches as part of their model of mission.

Indigenous-Creole Pentecostalism has reacted with a wide range of attitudes with regard to the ecumenical movement. Mission and unity is understood as pivotal, but the understanding and implementation of these concepts vary. Indigenous-Creole identity and mission is forged either by an openness to other Pentecostal churches and close links with Mainline denominations or by an exclusive attitude closed to any cooperation or relationship with other churches.

The Christian Congregation of Brazil is a very exclusive, closed, and anti-ecumenical organization, with no interdenominational connection within the country or internationally. It adheres to a self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating principle in mission, and it practices a very sectarian strategy and practice in the life and work of the denomination. For this Congregation, identity and mission means maintaining a rigid, fundamentalist position, defending an anti-political and anti-social involvement stance outside the limits of its own institutional control. It provides enterprises and businesses exclusively for the benefit of its own members.

The Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, the Christian Pentecostal Mission of Nicaragua, the Pentecostal Church of Chile, and the Church of God of Argentina are Indigenous-Creole Pentecostal Churches with an ecumenical orientation and commitment in Latin America and the Caribbean and internationally. All of them are partners in mission with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, the United Church of Christ, and the founding members of the Latin American Council of Churches. These are the denominations that provided leadership for the formation of CEPLA. The Pentecostal Church of Chile, the Pentecostal Church Mission of Chile, and the Church of God of Argentina are active members of the World Council of Churches. They have affirmed in their official documents and statements their identity and mission as an ongoing process of becoming more contextualized and identified with their national and local realities. Involvement in mission and unity for them is multi-faceted and dynamic process by which the ecumenical sharing of resources, evangelism, and social action and pastoral accompaniment are integrated into their model of mission. In areas of worship and music, these churches have offered new music and experiments in worship, including hymns and choruses that have impacted the ecumenical movement and Roman Catholic communities.

Divine healing and prosperity churches are different phenomena of recent development in Latin America and the Caribbean. They develop their model of mission from different

ecclesiological presuppositions. Their main emphasis is on building mega-churches in urban areas, with an aggressive anti-Roman Catholic stance. The bishop or president is a hero-impresario figure more than an evangelist. Their clientele is very diverse, including poor, middle, and upper middle classes. Their identity and mission is conceived as a transnational religious enterprise with economic power, which includes the role of mass media in evangelism. As a result, they own radio and TV networks and encourage active political participation, including having their own political parties, developing their own political affiliations, and electing representatives to Congress and other local and national elected positions. Mission and unity in this church model is defined by a global expansive dimension in planting mega-churches all over the world.

CHAPTER V

SHARING IN GOD'S MISSION: MISSION AS KINGDOM BUILDING

Disciples of Christ Mission Strategy

This chapter outlines the standards that guide the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States as they proclaim the kingdom of God by means of a mission strategy promoting unity. The Christian Church was founded on the American frontier, early in the nineteenth century. The Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky was a charismatic experience that renewed the lives of many believers to the point of wanting to restore the church following the apostolic pattern and model of the New Testament church. This Cane Ridge Revival and the “frontiering process” carrying pioneers west were two major forces that influenced the restoration movement from the beginning.

Developing a theology and strategy of mission is a historical process that is fraught with difficulties and contradictions. Barton W. Stone from Kentucky, along with European immigrants Alexander and Thomas Campbell and later Walter Scott from Scotland, agreed on two principles essential for the renewal of the church: the restoration principle, and Christian unity.³³² In combining both principles, restoration and unity, they created a tension but allowed for another important element: an experiment in freedom. According to religious historian Mark G. Toulouse,

The Disciples movement translated the culture of obsession with freedom into a religious declaration of the right of all common people to think through the claims of religion for themselves...Early Disciples so succeeded in speaking to and from their times that the Disciples expression of faith has been described as ‘an American apologetic.’³³³

Mission Strategy: Mission as Kingdom Building

Eminent theologian and ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr, in his classic work *The Kingdom of God in America*, examined various aspects of the development of a Christian vision and the perception of the kingdom of God among churches in North America. Niebuhr observed that the concept of a kingdom of God was a persistent and dominant idea in North American Christianity.³³⁴ Although this idea had consistence and continuity, each generation interpreted and shaped it according to its own values. During the colonial period, God's sovereignty was emphasized, particularly among the Puritans who, with their Reformed theology, viewed the

332 D. Duane Cummins, *A Handbook for Today's Disciples in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1991), 1-12.

333 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship: The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1997), 32.

334 H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1937). An interesting article analyzing the influence of contemporary ideas of enterprise on the concept of kingdom building in missionary work can be found in James H. Moorehead, “Engineering the Millennium: Kingdom Building in American Protestantism, 1820-1920,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin, Supplement 3*, 1994, 104-128.

creation of a new society as a historical process. The kingdom of God implied, for the Puritans, that God's sovereignty not only reigned over individuals and church but also extended to society as a whole, both in its public and civil dimensions. In other words, God's will was expected to be manifest in government and in the judicial-legal system.

The Great Awakening in the 1800s emphasized the redeeming kingdom of Jesus Christ--God's saving love extended to a society in dire need of redemption and social reform. Evangelist and social reformer Charles G. Finney gives us the most evident example of the impact of these two necessities. Finney proclaimed that the reign of good will with moral values would naturally extend the labor of the kingdom of God.³³⁵

By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the kingdom of God was perceived as an earthly realm, inspired by the idea of progress in the social Gospel. God's kingdom was believed to become visible in society through the transformation of believers. A society tagged by "structural sin" must be redeemed by a kingdom of corporate proportions capable of healing the sinful structure of this society.³³⁶

Church historian Dr. Clark Gilpin presented a similar viewpoint regarding the ecclesiology and theology of the kingdom of God in the Christian Church. Gilpin examines Disciples thought and praxis with regard to the "integrity of the Church" and its manifestation as God's people.³³⁷ A church that tries to preserve its integrity is one that tries to become whole, to live in unity, and to serve as an apostolate in sanctity of service--all of these as distinctive signs of its mission.³³⁸

Gilpin perceived that the Christian Church has undergone three distinct phases in its history of life and witness. During its formation between 1804 and 1832, its emphasis was on restoration and reform, leading to its emergence as a denomination by the 1850s. Over the turn of the century, the Christian Church was influenced by liberalism to expand into ecumenical cooperation and mission, thus being more visible and active as a new religious movement on American soil. Beginning in the mid-1900s, the denomination moved toward restructuring its ecumenical commitment and its missionary responsibility.³³⁹ Gilpin further expounds on these three phases, highlighting the influence of the Campbells' view of the "divine" as citizenship and the effect of reformed theology as promoting restructure, growth, and consolidation. The concept dominating the second phase of the Christian Church, according to Gilpin, was the kinship of God's people, ready to promote unity and work in mission in order to speed the restoration of God's kingdom. In the third phase the focus is communion with God, expressed in ecumenical

335 James H. Moorehead, *World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 50, 129.

336 Carmelo E. Álvarez, "Evangelio social," in *Diccionario de historia de la iglesia*, ed. Wilton M. Nelson (Miami, FL: Editorial Caribe, 1989), 425-26.

337 W. Clark Gilpin, "The Integrity of the Church: The Communal Theology of Disciples of Christ," in *Classical Themes of Disciples Theology*, ed. Kenneth Henry (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1986), 29-30. An important interpretation along these same lines is found in Mark G. Toulouse, "The Kingdom of God and Disciples of Christ," *Discipliana* 62 (1), 3-24, (spring 2002).

338 Ibid., 31.

339 Ibid.

cooperation and active promotion of mission. Throughout this process, Gilpin asserts, Christian Church leaders have tried to develop a theology embodied by affirmations, symbols, structures, and commitments that enable spiritual power in the life and mission of the Church. These principles of citizenship, kinship, communion, and symbols are unique theological-institutional contributions made to the ecumenical movement by the Christian Church.³⁴⁰

The restructuring process in the Christian Church, along with an incessant effort to forge a unique identity characterized by integrity, has given dynamism to the formulation of a unique ecclesiology and to the development of a mission strategy. Its work has had setbacks, but this effort has allowed remarkable and valuable advancement.

Frontier Mission Strategy

When the movement known as *the Christians*, or *Disciples*, emerged on the American socio-political scene, the United States was going through a process of growth and expansion.³⁴¹ A wave of European immigrants strove to live in a land of freedom and to forge new opportunities. Frontier spirit was expanding the territory through new conquests and colonization. Some historians, like Frederick Jackson Turner,³⁴² hypothesized that the expansion of colonial borders determined the growth and progress of American society in the first half of the nineteenth century. Commercial and economic expansion made the transformation of North America a dynamic one, allowing the United States to become a political and economic force beyond its territorial borders, particularly by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Liberal capitalism and a market economy were developing fully in this new landscape. In addition to the pioneer spirit and the thirst for land, the spirit of adventure in North America was piqued by an eagerness for profit, especially as people searched for precious metals like gold and silver. The result was a demographic explosion, the extermination of native peoples, and the black trade that created a system of slavery leading ultimately to the Civil War (1861-1865) that split the country and left its mark on United States history.³⁴³

The process the United States was experiencing reflected what was also happening in Europe. The Industrial Revolution was at its apex, and people anticipated an era of progress. Other factors influencing people of this era were new contributions by science, a common-sense philosophy, individualistic ideas of the Enlightenment, and fresh currents of empiricism and

340 Ibid., 32-46.

341 W. Clark Gilpin, "Faith on the Frontier: Historical Interpretations of the Disciples of Christ," in *A Case Study of Mainstream Protestantism: The Disciples Relation to American Culture 1880-1989*, ed. D. Newell Williams (Grand Rapids, MI-St. Louis, MO: W. B. Eerdmans and Chalice Press, 1991), 260-275.

342 D. B. Eller, "Frontier Religion," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry Stout (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 457. Eller's emphasis is that asserting religious determinism in frontier expansion is very simplistic, and he points out how different denominations were configuring their identities and mission in relationship to the frontier, assuming multiple challenges.

343 Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 221.

pragmatism. Some other important philosophical strains stimulating growth and dynamism were constitutionalism, the English Age of Reason, deism, positivism, liberalism, and a democratic spirit with its dream of freedom and individual volunteerism.

An inevitable result of all these new philosophical drives was the tendency to question all hierarchies and principles of authority. The social environment was infected by a *laissez-faire*, hands-off or “let them do it,” attitude. A common belief was that the meaning of freedom was emancipation from tradition and authority.³⁴⁴

The religious sector was not immune from these influences. Independent thought stimulated diversity in the life of the churches and allowed for the emergence of new religious movements and expressions. A new religious tolerance arose with the development of denominations.³⁴⁵

The expansion of the western borders had encouraged the proliferation of volunteer associations, which created new churches. Marked individualism, with optimism and confidence in new discoveries and advancements, created new ironies. On one hand a social awakening, with its high regard for stability, influenced the ethical-religious environment. Optimism awakened the idea that moral perfection and total sanctification were something that could be achieved. Thus, Puritanism and Holiness movements influenced the *civil religion*. On the other hand, mainline religious movements lacked agreement within because of the popular revival religions in which personal experience was essential.³⁴⁶

Revivals broke with strict denominationalism, and an interdenominational era pervaded the American religious scene. From 1792 to 1922, the United States enjoyed a period of great spiritual effervescence, with a religious pluralism sweeping the nation. In addition to the historic churches, independent spiritual groups like the Shakers, the Oneida Community, Mormons, and various pentecostal groups thrived at the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁴⁷

Primitivist-restorationist thought, the search for and restoration of a nostalgic “golden age” of the past, also appeared during this dynamic era, following the humanistic dream of Erasmus of Rotterdam and of the Renaissance to return to that earlier period when classical culture and pure Gospel were the paradigm that solved moral, spiritual, and intellectual decadence.

National symbols of the era reflect this combined humanism and religious dynamism. God’s eye is shown in a classical pyramid on the dollar bill, observing and approving history and nature’s processes: *Annuit coeptis* (he has smiled on our beginning). Under the pyramid is another great badge with this Latin phrase: *Novus ordo seculorum* (a new order for the ages). These symbols seem to point to the beginning of restoration; they suggest the illusion of returning to a classic age of innocence and purity.³⁴⁸

344 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 17.

345 Charles W. Forman, “The Americans,” in *Modern American Protestantism and its World*, ed. Martin Marty, 13. *Missions and Ecumenical Expressions* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), 38-47.

346 Paul A. Varg, “Motives in Protestant Missions 1890-1917,” in *Modern American Protestantism and its World*, ed. Martin Marty (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), 3-19.

347 Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Santidad y compromiso* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1985), 37-38.

348 Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence*, 1-24.

Thus many people believed that the way to correct all ecclesiastic and theological deviation was to return to the pattern of the early church. At its core, scientific method itself resulted from this mode of thought: common sense insisted that the data received by the senses was real, evident, and irrefutable. This attempt to return to the true path was an appeal to logic, natural law, and the rationalism of the age, although these concepts had been baptized as religious doctrinal criteria. These humanistic patterns are the dominating currents that molded the life and thought of the Christian Church.

The slogan “return to the Bible” summarized the intent of restorationists. Thus, the Bible, not the ecclesiastical tradition, was the source of supreme authority. Anyone with common sense could easily and confidently go directly to the Bible and could reject the authority of a minister or institution that was prepared to teach and interpret it. The spirit of the age was one of questioning and search. The result was to combine piety and reason as they had never been before.³⁴⁹

The Strategy of Restoration and Reform

It was in this broad context that Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Walter Scott instituted a new religious expression known as the “Restoration Movement,” the “experiment in freedom,” and the “second Reformation.”

Restoration, for the Christian Church, was a hermeneutical principle that allowed its adherents to go *ad fontes* to the biblical sources and from there to find a corrective for the deviations and divisions encountered on a daily basis by American Christianity in the nineteenth century. With the principle of free and reasoned interpretation, we can synthesize an authentic Christian Church theology.³⁵⁰ This theology leads to the heart of an authentic Christian Church piety--a living ecclesiastic tradition that nurtures and sustains faith. However, what Professor Larry D. Bouchard calls “a principle of interpretation” allowed for ambiguity in the Gospel message, creating an atmosphere of confusion and conflict.

The freedom principle states: “in the essential, unity; in the non-essential, tolerance; and in everything, love.”³⁵¹ Rev. Carmelo Álvarez Perez explains the tension between freedom and what is essential:

We are a men’s (sic) movement, free to [accept] the ideas and concepts of others. We oppose neither science, philosophy, *theology*, nor past or present conquest, when we are tested in every way about culture; but our position is diaphanous: Since we do not believe in creeds, because we do not have them; it is a moral, ethical and spiritual requirement, if we do not wish to renounce our principles, that the Bible be our compass in matters of faith (emphasis mine).³⁵²

349 George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 58-59.

350 Larry D. Bouchard, “The Interpretation Principle: A Foundational Theme of Disciples Theology,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, ed. L. Dale Richesin and Larry D. Bouchard (Fort Worth, TX: TCU, 1987), 22.

351 Disciples of Christ, “Declaration and Address” (1809), in D. Duane Cummings, *A Handbook for Today’s Disciples* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1991).

352 Raquel E. Rodríguez and Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Visiones de fe: Reflexiones*

The Christian Church freedom principle maintains, dynamically, a tension between restoration and unity that gives the Christian Church somewhat of a foundational theology where piety and reason, theology and faith live together as doctrinal attributes.

Christian theologians and missionaries are very aware that a creative tension exists between unity and diversity. Even in the New Testament and certainly in the early church, serious issues and conflict arose around different theological perspectives. As indicated by Carmelo Álvarez Pérez, the Disciples of Christ leaders “supported the thesis of Restoration and Renewal, knowing that in order to do so, it was necessary to pay the price.”³⁵³ The emphasis on restoration in the Disciples of Christ churches and the adoption of the unity principle to fuse organically with other denominational bodies eventually led to serious rupture.

For Carmelo Álvarez Pérez, the resulting “barriers and antagonism between the existing churches were such that a definition of principles, in light of the New Testament, could be delayed no further.”³⁵⁴ This need for definition caused church leaders to insist on unity as a hermeneutical principle, as the objective and polar star of the movement, in order to follow the pattern of the Old Testament and the practice the early church. More recently, the choice to promote unity and to restructure the Christian Church in 1968 led to the movement dividing into the Disciples of Christ and Independent Christian Churches.

There is great irony here: those who attempted a restoration and reform movement in order to promote Christian unity ended up dividing their own denomination. A certain naiveté existed among those who wished to “restore early times” without taking into account the historical and cultural complexities of that process. Carmelo Álvarez Pérez pointed out that Disciples of Christ leaders noticed early that their plan had failed and chose to consider “reforming the existing (churches).”³⁵⁵

Throughout church history movements have sprung up that have attempted, in ways similar to the efforts of the Disciples of Christ, to search for the roots of Christianity--before the deviation of established churches--in order to proclaim an authentic and pertinent Gospel. The churches of the Protestant Reformation had a principle similar to that of the Disciples of Christ: *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, or reformation, is a return to the pristine source of origin. Reformation has historically been a principle of judgment and disengagement.³⁵⁶

This Protestant principle of reform criticizes and questions even Protestantism itself when it becomes too comfortable and loses its prophetic role. German Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich says:

I understand Protestantism as the special and historical incarnation of a universally significant principle. This principle, in which an aspect of the human-divine relationship is declared, is effective in all moments of history... It is the ultimate criterion for all spiritual and religious experiences. Protestantism as a principle is an eternal and

teológico-pastorales del Rev. Carmelo Álvarez Pérez (San Jose, Costa Rica: *Edición Conmemorativa*, 1984), 62.

353 Raquel E. Rodríguez and Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Visiones de fe*, 20.

354 Ibid., 42.

355 Ibid., 42.

356 Richard Shaull, *The Reformation and Liberation Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 78.

permanent judgment of the temporary. Protestantism, as characteristic of a historical period is temporary and subject to Protestantism's eternal principle.³⁵⁷

This principle has been used to assert both the positive affirmation of evangelical principles defended and sustained by the Protestant Reformation and a Protestant "no" to any compromise of these fundamental theological principles.³⁵⁸ This principle has received admiration from Catholic theologians like Juan Luis Segundo, who states that "what Paul Tillich calls the 'Protestant Principle' is, truly and simply, Christian Principle."³⁵⁹ The Protestant principle is history's hermeneutic principle.³⁶⁰ This essential principle of reform allows us to return and once more engage in protest against absolutes, even of historical Protestantism and the Disciples of Christ. Carmelo Álvarez Pérez declares:

For the Disciples of Christ, each era has its history. Principles are principles; but society is in constant revolution, in one manner or another, and that is why the Church must always be at the frontier.³⁶¹

The phrase "at the frontier" points repeatedly to a matter of questioning, prophetic vision, or ultimate deadline. In his sermons, Carmelo Álvarez Pérez stated that to be at the frontier requires a reading of the "signs of the times" and an affirmation of the Pauline principle of non-conformity to the present time.³⁶²

The Christian Church movement had various manifestations before establishing the denomination that became known by the current name of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States. Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian pastor from Kentucky, became involved with the famous *camp meetings* like Cane Ridge in the summer of 1801. This was a great revival, including Spirit dancing, speaking in tongues, and other charismatic expressions. This experience (although many authors³⁶³ indicate that Stone became worried at the excesses at Cane Ridge) led to his breach with the Springfield Presbytery and consequently to his writing *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, published in 1804, in which he underlines his will to separate from the Reformed tradition and join the body of Christ in the search for unity.³⁶⁴

In 1807 Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian pastor who had immigrated from Scotland, published *Declaration and Address* in which he insisted that the Church was essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally One. Thus he also began a restoration movement, restoring the faith of earlier times.³⁶⁵

After 1832, the movements led by Stone and Campbell merged. Soon thereafter Walter

357 Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 162-163.

358 José M. Gómez Heras, *Teología protestante: Sistema e historia* (Madrid, Spain: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1972), 3-7. Spanish Catholic theologian Gómez-Heras stresses the importance of this paradoxical principle in order to understand Protestant theology and life.

359 Juan Luis Segundo, *El dogma que libera* (Santander, Spain: Sal Terrae, 1989), 308.

360 Ibid., 302-309.

361 Raquel E. Rodríguez and Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Visiones de fe*, 36.

362 Ibid., 123.

363 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 26.

364 Colbert S. Cartwright, *People of the Chalice* (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1987), 14.

365 Ibid.

Scott, whose evangelistic ability and capability to teach the Gospel had invigorated a similar movement, joined with Stone and Campbell. With Scott, the new movement showed noticeable growth.³⁶⁶

This combined movement continued to strengthen and grow, particularly in the Midwest. It became the expression of a genuinely American faith movement, strongly modeled by the frontier spirit of expansion characteristic of its age.³⁶⁷

The Strategy: Mission and Unity

For the past two hundred years, the modern mission movement has had as its main axis a dynamic tension between mission and unity. Missionary presence in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean initiated in 1792 by William Carey, British Baptist missionary to India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), opened a new era of ecumenical cooperation and missionary expansion. Yale University's Baptist historian Kenneth Scott Latourette called the years between 1814 and 1915 in mission history Protestantism's "Great Missionary Century." An aggressive and expansive wave of missions covered Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Dr. Charles R. Taber, American anthropologist and missiologist, analyzed these past two hundred years and concluded that the close relationship between intellectual, scientific, cultural, religious, and political processes was a determinant of mission's strategy and theology. This combination of cultural elements with the spread of the Gospel was so extreme and was of such magnitude that culture and mission became ideologically interwoven.³⁶⁸

The nineteenth century was an era of excitement and progress during which mission work developed in a surprising way. The two Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries propitiated the environment for this missionary impulse and, in the meantime, became the moving force for the unity movement that developed during the twentieth century. The roots were already present for the Great Ecumenical Century that would begin in 1910. Spiritual ferment and evangelistic fervor were two of the ingredients that transformed the established churches. Once churches were renewed, preaching, Christian education, Bible studies, and social service became the predominant hub around which missionary work revolved.³⁶⁹

Beginning in 1845, the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which portrayed the United States as a nation chosen to fulfill a great mission in the world, spread through all levels of American society, including churches.³⁷⁰ It was broadly influential in the missionary movement and many times confused the Gospel with American culture, something never seen before in the history of missions.³⁷¹ Other social movements, such as those of students, women's societies, faith

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 16.

³⁶⁷ Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (London, UK: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1-56.

³⁶⁸ Charles R. Taber, *The World Is Too Much with Us: Culture in Modern Protestant Mission* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 55-88.

³⁶⁹ R. Pierce Beaver, "Historia de la estrategia misionera," in *Mision mundial: La dimension estratégica*, vol. II, ed. Jonatán P. Lewis (Miami, FL: UNILIT, 1990), 23-38.

³⁷⁰ Walter La Feber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Press, 1963), 1-60.

³⁷¹ Rubén Lores, "El destino manifiesto y la empresa misionera," in *Lectura teológica*

missions, independent missionary groups, and institutions for theological education were also catalysts for mission work. Liberal theology and its expression of social evangelism also influenced church life. By the grace of God and despite much cultural imperialism, many lives and countries were reached for the true accomplishment of mission.³⁷²

One of the most important results of Manifest Destiny was that evangelization came to be seen as a civilizing process.³⁷³ The progress mentality propitiated by liberalism defended the assumption that humanity was moving toward a higher stage of development--that of the European and American cultures. Ideally, this more highly developed civilization should extend throughout the world and among all cultures. The chosen people would become the chosen culture.

However, other cultures with autonomy and characteristic values do exist and should be respected even while sharing the Good News of the Gospel. The lessons we can learn from the history of missions are of incalculable value in this endeavor.³⁷⁴

Disciples Look Outward

The Christian Church grew and developed first as a frontier ministry and then as a missionary ministry in the world. The first phase in the missionary development of Disciples of Christ was vertiginous, its growth four times that of the country's burgeoning population. In 1827, when Walter Scott became the great evangelist and organizer of the movement, his leadership gave it the theological consistency it needed. The successes of his pedagogical prowess and his eloquence in preaching were fundamental to Disciples of Christ growth, particularly in the United States Midwest. However, the movement did not have yet a spirit that would go beyond the national frontier mentality. It lacked the global dimension of mission. Consequently, at the first National Convention in 1849 in Cincinnati, Ohio,³⁷⁵ the mission of the Church, both at the national and global levels, was the predominant theme. The American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) was established to oversee Disciples of Christ's missionary work and to coordinate the voluntary mission effort of local congregations.³⁷⁶

During its first two decades, missionary work outside the United States made slow progress. The Civil War divided the nation, affecting the churches and slowing down much of the missionary zeal.

del tiempo latinoamericano, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez and Pablo Leggett (San Jose, Costa Rica: Latin American Biblical Seminary, 1979), 207-225. See also Gerald H. Anderson, "American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission: 1886-1986," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 12 3: 98-101, July 1988.

³⁷² Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 272-303.

³⁷³ William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 102-104.

³⁷⁴ Charles R. Taber, *The World Is Too Much with Us*, 65-68, 174-179.

³⁷⁵ Mark J. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 171-172.

³⁷⁶ J. Edward Moseley, "The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Overseas Ministries," in *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): An Interpretative Examination in the Cultural Context*, ed. George G. Beazley, Jr. (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1973), 237-238.

Around 1874, women constituted the predominant voluntary leadership in mission work. As analyzed by R. Pierce Beaver and Ruth Tucker, this volunteerism was the domineering force in missions.³⁷⁷

During a moment of prayer and devotion in April, 1874, Caroline Neville Pearre had a vision. That morning, excited and enlightened by the Spirit, Mrs. Pearre began a movement in Iowa City, Iowa, and as a result, six months later the Christian Women's Mission Board (CWMB) was established to support missions.

In 1875, Disciples of Christ men formed the Foreign Christian Missionary Society (FCMS). In 1882 the women's and men's missionary societies joined efforts in India, Japan, China, Panama, Belgian Congo, and Cuba.³⁷⁸

Archibald McLean was the most important strategist of missionary work. His efforts united the scattered missionary labor of the Disciples of Christ. In 1890, McLean gave impetus to the idea of more effective mission cooperation among the Disciples of Christ. By enlarging its ecumenical participation, McLean also broadened the theological vision of the Disciples of Christ and its conception of mission. McLean combined the concepts of mission and unity as an indissoluble axis for the expansion of the Gospel, thus showing that ecumenical cooperation was an essential principle for the Disciples of Christ. A clearer and more defined strategy was adopted, which eventually led to disagreements with the churches in the southern United States.³⁷⁹

As a result of these disagreements, by the turn of the century churches in the south had seceded from the Christian Church and formed what we now call the Churches of Christ. They rejected missionary cooperation and the use of musical instruments in worship, radically adhering to the restoration principle.³⁸⁰

Missionary Strategy: From Missions to Mission

Around 1919 the Disciples of Christ missionary effort was consolidated by the fusion of the three existing mission boards (the Christian Women's Mission Board, the American Mission Society, and the Foreign Christian Missionary Society under the United Christian Missionary

377 R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 2-20; and Ruth Tucker, *Guardians of the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 55-90.

378 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 172; and J. Edward Moseley, "The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Overseas Ministries," 239-241.

379 Ibid. See also Russell E. Myers, "The Contribution of Archibald McLean to the Missionary Work of the Disciples of Christ," M.A. Thesis, Butler University, June 1959; and William Robinson Warren, *The Life and Labors of Archibald Mclean* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1923).

380 For a well balanced and interesting analysis of this process, two books are valuable: Henry E. Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1990); and James B. North, *Union in Truth: An Interpretative History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1994).

Society (UCMS), thus beginning a new era for the mission work of the Disciples of Christ.³⁸¹ Many of the missionary contacts and relationships in countries like Paraguay, Puerto Rico, and India began to grow and mature under this new impulse. The idea of kingdom building was emphasized as the center of the Disciples of Christ mission strategy.

Between 1928 and 1948 the tension mounted between neo-orthodox currents among the Christian Churches and the liberal Christocentrism. Theological ambiguity left a great gap and provoked serious difficulties and confusion. While some missionaries emphasized preaching and personal evangelizing as the central purpose of mission, others insisted that the concepts of *diakonia*, emphasizing life and work, and *koinonia*, focusing on personal faith and evangelism, were at the center of a missionary strategy that emphasized service.³⁸² Throughout these internal incongruities, the Disciples of Christ tried to continue developing a more ecumenical mission strategy.³⁸³ The historical tension between restoration and ecumenism continued to influence the theology of mission among the Disciples of Christ.³⁸⁴

During the postwar context of 1948 through 1955, international and ecumenical relations forced UCMS to redefine and clarify its strategy for missionary work.³⁸⁵ Significant changes were underway in China, and the dynamics of Disciples of Christ missionary relationships with the United Churches in Japan and the Philippines were formative to the development of a theology and mission strategy among Disciples of Christ. The 1952 Willingen Conference in Germany, organized by the International Missionary Council, became a landmark in the process of developing mission strategy as participants addressed issues of missionary responsibility and the foundational theological principle of *missio Dei*.³⁸⁶

After many additional consultations and revisions,³⁸⁷ the process begun at the Willingen Conference finally culminated in the 1959 adoption of “A Strategy of World Mission Policy” outlining the following principles for mission:

1. Christian mission is understood as one of global nature, with a call to all Christian Churches to fulfill the part that belongs to them in every level of the mission.
2. The mission of the church occurs in the context of revolution and swift social changes.

381 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 175-180.

382 Ibid., 180-185.

383 Don Pittman and Paul A. Williams, “Mission and Evangelism: Continuing Debates and Contemporary Interpretations,” in *Interpreting Disciples: Practical Theology in the Disciples of Christ*, ed. L. Dale Richesin, and Larry Bouchard (Fort Worth, TX: TCU, 1987) 217.

384 Ibid., 221.

385 UCMS, *The Growing World Mission of Disciples of Christ* (Indianapolis, IN: UCMS, 1959), 12.

386 Ibid.

387 Ibid. The definitive opus in this matter is Dr. Joseph M. Smith, “A Strategy of World Missions: The Theory and Practice of Mission as Seen in the Present World Mission Enterprise of the Disciples of Christ,” Th. D. Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1961. See also Paul A. Crow, Jr., “Mission, Evangelism and Ecclesiology among the Disciples of Christ,” *Mid-Stream* 40: 84-109, January/April 2001.

3. Both “young” and “old” churches reinforce their partnerships.
4. Mission and unity are the means by which the UCMS will participate, commensurable to its possibilities, in a cooperative enterprise.
5. Program mobility and flexibility demand that non-relevant projects be replaced and, in many cases, transferred to the national churches, in order to improve witness and service.
6. Mission and evangelization are central to every Christian and cannot be delegated.
7. Management of mission work is shared between UCMS representatives and national church leadership.³⁸⁸

The impact of this 1959 strategy document has been questionable. As observed by Disciples missionary and missiologist Joseph M. Smith, the tension between personal evangelization and evangelization as service remained a source of ambiguity in Disciples of Christ mission strategy,³⁸⁹ and some denominational theologians pointed out that the document did not lay out a solid theology of mission.³⁹⁰

UCMS continued to evaluate, refine, and defend its mission strategy as the denomination itself underwent a restructuring process from 1961 to 1968, solidifying the new denominational identity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. This restructure applied to all units and commissions of the new church, including its mission programs and administration.³⁹¹ UCMS became the proper agency for all Disciples of Christ missions, establishing under its purview the Division of Homeland Ministries (DHM) and the Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM) as effective missionary branches of the new denomination.³⁹² After another period of consultation and debate between 1977 and 1981, a new mission strategy was proclaimed in a new document: “General Principles and Policies of the

388 This author summarized the contents of the strategy document, finally incorporated in UCMS strategy in 1961, in *A Strategy of World Mission Basic Policy of the Division of World Mission* (Indianapolis, IN: UCMS, 1959), 1-27. Division of World Mission, UCMS, “Strategy of Ecumenical Concerns” has also been consulted, both the revisions of 1960 and the approved document of March 22, 1961, 1-10. The 1961 addendum includes a listing of national churches and the ecumenical projects in which UCMS participates around the world. For analyses of the document, the most important sources are: Joseph M. Smith, “A Strategy of World Missions,” 21-26; Don Pittman and Paul A. Williams, “Mission and Evangelism,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, 222-239; and Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 189-190.

389 Joseph M. Smith, “A Strategy of World Missions,” 225.

390 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 189-190; Harold Carl Moeller, *Toward a Post-Revolutionary Theological Foundation for the Overseas Ministry Enterprise of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1977); and Don Pittman and Paul A. Williams, “Mission and Evangelism,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, 229.

391 Robert L. Friedly and D. Duane Cummins, *The Search for Identity: Disciples of Christ--The Restructure Years* (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1987), 29-41, 153-176.

392 Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 191; and Don Pittman and Paul A. Williams, “Mission and Evangelism,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, ed. L. Dale Richesin, and L. Bouchard, 229.

Division of Overseas Ministries.”³⁹³ This document attempts to fill the theological void often found in prior mission documents. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) finally began to articulate a mature mission strategy and theology.

The “General Principles and Policies” document presented at the Anaheim, California, Assembly in 1981 represented the most serious effort on the part of the Disciples of Christ to solve the historical tension between mission and evangelization. It also tried to overcome the condescending imperialism and colonialism underlying mission for the past two centuries. Although the document did not prevent criticism from the sectors of the church that saw personal evangelism and church establishment de-prioritized, it did allow for the denomination to affirm a profoundly biblical mission theology with a broader and more realistic vision of the modern world and its complexities.³⁹⁴ Debate over this document incited great controversy in Anaheim, but it allowed the denomination to recapture the centrality of three fundamental principles of the Disciples of Christ: interpretation, restoration, and ecumenicity.³⁹⁵

The DOM “General Principles and Policies” document leans toward a broader and more progressive position in mission, widening its vision of evangelism and enabling interreligious and interconfessional dialogue and ecumenical cooperation, along with emphasizing work toward a more just and humanitarian society.³⁹⁶ The DOM thus attempted to manage Disciples of Christ mission strategy with integrity and respect toward its partners in mutuality for mission.³⁹⁷ It encouraged cultural contextualization of mission, a concept refined by the World Council of Churches in the 1970s.³⁹⁸

One portion of this new document outlined a clear theological posture that again grasped at a root principle of the Disciples of Christ: the Church is One and should not be divided but should strive for a unity in diversity. The new DOM strategy stated that a “commitment to

393 “General Principles and Policies of the Division of Overseas Ministries” (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1981).

394 Don Pittman and Paul A. Williams, “Mission and Evangelism,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, ed. L. Dale Richesin, and L. Bouchard, 206-207.

395 Ibid., 208-209. This writer was present at this debate as a missionary, representing Latin American Biblical Seminary (now Latin American Biblical University) in Costa Rica, and was able to perceive both the tensions and the affirmations. An important element to highlight is that the Disciples of Christ reflect how they have been influenced by the most progressive theological streams in Europe, North America, and the Third World. This shows great sensitivity, as well as great openness to consider the challenges of partnership with national churches in the different countries in which mission cooperation exists.

396 “General Principles and Policies,” 16.

397 Ibid., 17.

398 John S. Pobee, “Theology Contextual,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 985-986. Pobee makes a clear reference to Shoki Coe’s famous application of contextualization to theological education: “By contextualization we mean the wrestling with God’s word in such a way that the power of the incarnation, which is the divine form of contextualization, can enable us to follow his steps to contextualize.” The DOM reflects this same emphasis in its document “General Principles and Policies,” 22.

evangelism, mission, and justice is inseparable from a commitment to Church union.”³⁹⁹

Another portion of “Principles and Policies” defines policies and directives that support a global presence while respecting the local cultural expressions of the church.⁴⁰⁰ The fundamental, while creative, point of the document, and the most frequently quoted, is the following:

God has never, in any place, been without witness. One who is more fully known in Jesus Christ has been and is at work in the creation of community, the sharing of love, the seeking of freedom, the search for truth, the reactions of wonder and awe in the presence of nature’s power and beauty and creativity, and the awareness of the worth of persons.⁴⁰¹

This paragraph is likely the most succinct synthesis of the Disciples of Christ mission theology in any official document, with the exception of the *Design* implementing the restructure of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) into the singular Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1968. Robert A. Thomas, President of the DOM and main strategist of the “General Principles and Policies” document, points out that this document makes a qualitative leap, both in its theology and in the strategy that it designs.⁴⁰² The document also presents a theological definition of Gospel that has implications for mission. Various theological elements are integrated into this definition:

The announcement of God’s Kingdom of love through Jesus Christ; the offer of Grace and forgiveness of sins; the invitation to repentance and faith; the summons to fellowship in God’s saving words and deeds; the responsibility to participate in the struggle for justice and human dignity; the obligation to denounce all that hinders wholeness; a commitment to risk life itself.⁴⁰³

“General Principles and Policies” theologically surpassed the prior 1961 Strategy for World Mission Policy and became a more pertinent theology of mission for the future.⁴⁰⁴ Although more conservative positions still persisted in the denomination regarding the theology of mission, a commitment to mission and unity as the central foci of Disciples of Christ theology continued to be essential to the denomination’s ecumenical work.⁴⁰⁵

399 Ibid., 17.

400 Ibid., 22.

401 Ibid., 16.

402 Robert A. Thomas, *Where in the World Are We Going? The Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1973).

403 Ibid., 18.

404 Don A. Pittman and Paul A. Williams, “Mission and Evangelism,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, ed. L. Dale Richesin and L. Bouchard, 235. An important document that reinforces this mission and unity posture is the official Disciples one presented by the Commission for Theology; see “A Word to the Church on Witness, Mission and Unity” (1981), in *The Church for Disciples of Christ: Seeking to be Truly Church Today*, ed. Paul A. Crow, Jr., and James O. Duke (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1998), 93-99.

405 Ibid., 240-244. A recently published book confirms what is presented here: Stephen V. Sprinkle, *Disciples and Theology: Understanding the Faith of a People in Covenant* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 99-142.

Mission Strategy: Unity in Mission

There has been much debate in past years regarding the relationship between mission and unity; almost all development in the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century has been characterized by this debate.⁴⁰⁶ The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has participated at all levels in this ecumenical conversation and, therefore, also has fully embraced both principles. To members of this denomination, mission and unity are inseparable, because both are commanded by God. Jesus commissioned His followers to meet the missionary mandate of “making disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Likewise, promoting unity is demanded by Jesus’ prayer “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). Both of these dimensions of mission must be the church’s primary concern in its pilgrimage toward the kingdom of God.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) believes that unity is the true nature of the church. Its celebration of images of *koinonia* as the true vine (John 15), the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12), and Jesus Christ’s command to “be One” (John 17) reaffirm these beliefs.⁴⁰⁷ After the Christian Churches split, the branch of the Christian Church known today as the Disciples of Christ is that which remained committed to ecumenical and missionary cooperation. As stated by Carmelo Álvarez Pérez:

No other denomination has been more active in cooperative enterprises between churches in the years past, nor shown more sympathy toward the ecumenical wave, thinking less about the churches and more about the Church.⁴⁰⁸

Carmelo Álvarez Pérez raises the fundamental point that beyond local congregations, regional, and national structures, the Disciples of Christ and all missionary groups should keep in mind the church universal—the kingdom of God. Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell, W. Barton Stone, and Walter Scott, founders of the Disciples of Christ movement, recognized this demand and therefore insisted on unity, based on the Church as One.⁴⁰⁹ This perspective of a universal kingdom of God is a healthy principle that reveals historical conflicts preventing unity and affirms the search for unity in a scatological dimension toward the future. Disciples of Christ theologian and ecumenist Dr. Michael Kinnamon details that, in its special heritage and call to Christian unity, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has prioritized four topics within the discussion of unity: unity and mission; unity and Scripture; unity and freedom; and unity and local church.⁴¹⁰

By “sense of unity and mission” Kinnamon implies that the Disciples of Christ denomination is opposed to sectarianism and division. The Disciples of Christ movement has been injured by divisions that have been difficult to overcome, despite its good intentions and

406 Two books trace this problem with depth and circumspection: David Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980); and Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

407 Ibid., 257.

408 Raquel E. Rodríguez and Carmelo E. Álvarez, ed., *Visiones de fe*, 31.

409 Michael Kinnamon, “A Special Calling: Christian Unity and the Disciples of Christ,” in *Interpreting Disciples*, ed. L. Dale Richesin and L. D. Bouchard, 250-251.

410 Ibid., 256.

optimism. In a world torn apart and fragmented, the Disciples of Christ stubbornness to overcome division is a witness to unity. Unity is not a tactically or functionally convenient principle but a condition for mission.⁴¹¹ Working and being in mission are essential to fulfilling the Christian mandate of being a witness to the world.⁴¹²

Kinnamon's concept of "unity and Scripture" leads to a return to sacred Scripture and to the understanding that the Church is apostolic, honoring the authority of the apostolic tradition and the faith and practice of the Early Church as a model for the Church. The biblical witness that is common to all Christian confessions confirms an apostolic tradition.⁴¹³ Apostolic faith is a point of reference in ecumenical dialogue and helps to clarify the role and place of the church in Christian history and tradition.

Unity and freedom is exemplified by Kinnamon as flexibility and openness to dialogue and mutual understanding with other churches.⁴¹⁴ To agree on what is essential for unity is hard work. It is not enough to declare: "in the essential, unity." To proclaim freedom does not imply relinquishing articulated belief structures or faith practices and being left with no "confessional" handle.

Dr. William J. Nottingham, President of the DOM from 1983 until 1993, emphasizes that despite conflicting paradigms and other controversies, mission and unity are inseparable. Ecclesiology is determined by mission and involves Christians in that mission. Nottingham has observed the evolution of Disciples of Christ mission theology and concludes that mission as ecclesiology is what has allowed the church to give shape to its global ministries, based on the spirit of unity. Unity has been the central focus for Disciples of Christ throughout one hundred and fifty years of mission work, despite tensions provoked by denominationalism and diverse ecclesiological interpretations.⁴¹⁵ Nottingham's observations on unity in the Disciples of Christ denomination can be summarized as a search for identity and mission for the future, a challenge that awaits the denomination, and a capability to respond positively from this ecclesiastic tradition and heritage.⁴¹⁶

Conclusions

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) emerged from the restoration movement that also gave birth to the Churches of Christ, Independent Disciples, and the Christian Churches. All of these churches initially share a common heritage as a frontier religious movement in the

411 Ibid., 258.

412 Ibid.

413 Ibid., 259.

414 Ibid., 261.

415 William J. Nottingham, "Mission as Ecclesiology: Christian Identity and the Burden of Denominationalism," in *The Vision of Christian Unity: Essays in Honor of Paul A. Crow, Jr.*, ed. Thomas F. Best and Theodore J. Nottingham (Indianapolis, IN: Oikumene Publications, 1997).

416 Robert L. Friedly and D. Duane Cummins, *The Search for Identity*, 153-169; Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Disciples of Christ in the 21st Century* (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1988), 23-27, 67-77; and Robert D. Cornwall, "The Crisis in Disciples of Christ Ecclesiology: The Search for Identity," *Encounter* 55 2: 167-183 (spring 1994).

United States. While the other churches stressed preaching and personal evangelism and experience, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) opted for an ecumenical commitment that stressed mission and unity as its polar star. Mission and unity are the pillars of the ecumenical commitment, moving from missions to mission (God's Mission) and toward a more consistent and integral strategy for mission. A central theme in this mission strategy has been kingdom building that combines ecclesiology and theology with three distinctive emphases: the members of the church as citizens of a divine kingdom, the kinship of God's people as active agents in promoting mission in unity to restore the kingdom of God, and the kingdom as communion with God manifested in ecumenical global cooperation for justice and the spread of the Gospel.

The Disciples of Christ adopted the *missio Dei* concept to develop a contextualizing process and to define a mission theology that consistently interconnected the church and the broader kingdom of God in a creative, dialectical tension. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) encourages openness to an ongoing search for identity and mission without compromising unity. The affirmation of a unity in diversity is a key element to maintaining a balance between retaining the freedom to examine and interpret and aiming at a unified consensus in essential doctrinal principles.

CHAPTER VI

SHARING IN GOD'S MISSION: MISSION AS LIBERATING SPIRIT
EVANGELICAL PENTECOSTAL UNION OF VENEZUELA MISSION STRATEGY

This chapter analyzes the mission strategy of the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela by tracing its history, some of its major issues, and the challenges it faced in becoming an autonomous pentecostal denomination in Venezuela, with an emphasis on its mission strategy as “liberating Spirit” and as ecumenical commitment.

Reclaiming Roots

The Venezuelan Evangelical Pentecostal Union (UEPV) is a national pentecostal movement organized officially on January 12, 1957 and born out of the vision of a group of eleven Venezuelan Assemblies of God pastors influenced by the life and ministry of Gottfried Friedrich Bender. These pastors decided to initiate their own national pentecostal movement⁴¹⁷ based on a fundamental conviction they shared: that the church should avoid sectarian attitudes. These pastors experienced the Holy Spirit as a liberating experience for simple and poor people, and they wanted to work in cooperation with other denominations. They felt that the Assemblies of God was a powerful and well-organized institution with well-intentioned missionaries, but its work and governance were controlled from the United States, and it often exhibited a paternalistic attitude toward native Venezuelans.⁴¹⁸

UEPV church historian Ramón Castillo traced the context and origins of Venezuelan pentecostalism by identifying five crucial moments in its history:

- the pioneer efforts of G. F. Bender and his wife Christine from 1919 to 1942
- the 1946 establishment of three national districts within the Assemblies of God and a National Convention in 1947⁴¹⁹
- the secession of pastors from the Assemblies of God to establish the UEPV in 1957
- the “divine healing” movements from Puerto Rico and the United States in the 1960s and 70s
- the establishment of new televangelism and neo-pentecostal movements⁴²⁰

The Venezuelan pentecostal movement arose during a politically and economically transitional period of Venezuelan history. During the late nineteenth century Venezuela

417 Ramón Castillo, “Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela: Identidad, compromiso y misión de la UEPV 1957-1997*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo (Maracaibo, Venezuela: Ediciones UEPV, 1997), 12.

418 Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, December, 1978, Santa Bárbara del Zulia.

419 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha: Reseña de las Asambleas de Dios en Argentina, Brasil, Venezuela, Ecuador, República Dominicana y Cuba*, vol. III (Deerfield, FL: Editorial Vida, 1996), 86.

420 Ramón Castillo, “Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 1.

produced coffee and coconut, but General Juan Vicente Gómez, Venezuelan dictator until 1935, changed this situation by transforming the country's agrarian economy to an oil economy.⁴²¹ As a result of Gómez' multinational petroleum project, Venezuela became the second largest oil producer in the world.⁴²²

The first pentecostal missionary in Barquisimeto in the state of Lara was G. F. Bender, a German-American pastor.⁴²³ While still living in New York, Bender was converted in a Holiness congregation of the Evangelical United Brethren in 1902, was baptized in the Holy Spirit at a Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation in 1907, and studied at the Nyack Bible Institute. According to the official missionary profile of G. F. Bender, number 0699750, G. F. Bender was born in Germany August 25, 1877, and became "American by naturalization." He was ordained on December 1, 1912, at Newark Pentecostal Assembly and appointed officially as missionary of the Assemblies of God on May 20, 1937.⁴²⁴ According to Luisa Jeter de Walker the Convention of the Assemblies of God was organized in August 14-17, 1947 in Caracas, Venezuela.⁴²⁵

Bender was a man of prayer, deep convictions, and a sense of calling into missionary work. One day while praying he had a vision in which a world map showed Venezuela as the only country, and he took it as a sign. He was very reluctant at the beginning about this calling to Venezuela.⁴²⁶ However, on February 24, 1914, his Nyack Bible Institute friend Fred Bullen, who later worked in Venezuela with the American Bible Society, put Bender in contact with Rev. Gerald Bially, director of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Venezuela. Bender subsequently departed for Caracas, Venezuela, where he was trained as a missionary at the Hebrón Bible Institute and learned Spanish. Hans Waldvogel, pastor of an independent Assemblies of God church in Brooklyn, New York, was another friend and collaborator with Bender during his initial incursions in Venezuela.

After Bullen's death, Bender continued the efforts to discern his role and future in Venezuela. He returned to the United States and married Christine Schwager Kopittke in 1918, then returned to Venezuela to begin a mission in Barquisimeto, in the Lara district of northern Venezuela. This time Bender did not have the support of friends at the Christian and Missionary Alliance, but he felt that God would direct the way into Barquisimeto.⁴²⁷

421 Ibid., 2.

422 Ramón Castillo, "Elementos para una historia del pentecostalismo en Venezuela," in *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia latinoamericana*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI-CEPLA, 1992), 59-66.

423 Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, December, 1978, Santa Bárbara del Zulia. Exeario Sosa Luján, the leading figure of this new movement, always referred to "Federico Bender" (Sosa's translation into Spanish of Bender's name) as the "most decent, honest and humble Christian and missionary, I knew in all my life."

424 "G. F. Bender, Missionary Profile, Personal Files."

425 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. III, 86

426 Roberto Domínguez, *Pioneros de pentecostés, Venezuela y Colombia*, vol. 2 (Barcelona, Spain: Committee on Literature for Evangelical Churches, 1990), 23.

427 Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, Campamento Nino Suárez, Uveral, Venezuela, Holy Week, 1977. See also G. F. Bender, "Revival in Venezuela," *The Christian*

The first person to assist Bender was Federico Cardoze, a Jewish tailor and freemason who was publicly anti-Catholic and who became the first person to convert to pentecostalism in Venezuela. The second convert was a distinguished district judge Rafael Alvarado. On September 21, 1922, Bender, his wife Christine, and these first converts, along with another group of sympathizers, inaugurated Bethel Chapel as the first pentecostal mission in Barquisimeto.⁴²⁸

Bender was very interested in educating the people and caring for their needs. In 1924 he inaugurated the *Instituto Evangélico*, an elementary school during the day and a Bible institute to prepare pastors and leaders in the evenings.⁴²⁹

Bender hoped for a revival in Barquisimeto. During a worship service August 9, 1924, a revival did erupt, and it became the initial impulse for the expansion of pentecostalism in Venezuela. Expanding from Lara to Falcón and on to other districts of Venezuela, the pentecostal experience reached many lives. By 1926 Bender was convinced that this growing movement was a missionary initiative of the Holy Spirit to bless the Venezuelan people.⁴³⁰ The next two decades were a complete success both in establishing educational institutions and orphanages and in starting new congregations.⁴³¹

G. F. Bender was a visionary leader with creativity and initiative. He relied on his friends and followers and trusted them to the end.⁴³² The pentecostal movement in Venezuela grew very fast, and soon a desperate need for financial resources and missionary personnel became apparent. Bender and the “Barquisimeto movement”⁴³³ decided to join the Assemblies of God,⁴³⁴ which had been founded in 1947 with Rafael Alvarado, Juan Bautista Alfaro, Segundo Gil, Prisciliano Rodríguez, Martín Chirinos, Sacramento Cobos, and Edmundo Jordán⁴³⁵ as the key

Evangel (April 19, 1919), 10.

428 Ramón Castillo, “Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 3-4.

429 Ibid.

430 Roberto Domínguez, *Pioneros de pentecostés, Venezuela y Colombia*, vol. 2, 48-84.

431 Ramón Castillo, “Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangelica Pentecostal Venezolana,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 5-6. See also G. F. Bender, “Incidents during the Venezuela Revival,” *The Pentecostal Evangel* (July 10, 1926), 2-3, 8.

432 Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, Campamento Nino Suárez, Uveral, Venezuela, Holy Week, 1977.

433 Ibid. Exeario Sosa always used this phrase to describe the group that Bender led in Barquisimeto. But for Sosa it implied the inheritance of the “initial vision” and “genuine missionary fervor” of Bender.

434 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 85. G. F. Bender and his wife Christine joined the Assemblies of God as missionaries in 1937. They retired and went back to the United States in 1947. According to Sosa, Bender wanted the Venezuelan Pentecostals to have an “organization to give you support.” See Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, Campamento Nino Suárez, Uveral, Venezuela, Holy Week, 1977.

435 Edmundo Jordán became a Disciples of Christ pastor in Puerto Rico. He was the author’s pastor in Candelaria Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from 1960 until 1963 and

leaders in the different states of Venezuela According to Luisa Jeter de Walker, the Convention of the Assemblies of God was organized in August 14-17, 1947, in Caracas, Venezuela..⁴³⁶

In 1948 the Assemblies of Godm established the “*Instituto Bíblico Central*” in Barquisimeto.⁴³⁷ This Institute became the training center for national pastors. Ingve Olson, the first Assemblies of God missionary from the United States to Venezuela, was named the first Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Venezuela.⁴³⁸ Later, Pastor Exeario Sosa became the first native Venezuelan named to the post of Superintendent in 1952. Sosa was very attentive to the establishment of the missionary training school. The Venezuelan pastors and the foreign missionaries had different criteria about missionary work in Venezuela. The missionaries were interested in the development of an “exclusive Assemblies of God” organization, but the national pastors envisioned the church that Bender had begun based on a simple Gospel message, interdenominational cooperation, and tolerance.⁴³⁹ Sosa remembered that Bender’s treatment of the Venezuelans was “always cordial and respectful,” but the Assemblies of God leaders were beginning to show a “paternalistic and controlling attitude.”⁴⁴⁰ By 1956 it was evident that a confrontation was inevitable. According to Sosa, the missionaries were more flexible in ethical, doctrinal, and biblical matters than the national pastors, but they were less committed to relief for the poor and to interdenominational cooperation and social service, which were of prime concern to the Venezuelans⁴⁴¹

G. F. Bender came to Venezuela with a dream--a vision that bore fruit. For years he and his wife Christine prayed for a revival. When it finally came in 1924, their congregation Bethel in Barquisimeto became the harbinger of a revival that spread to many states in Venezuela. Bender’s wisdom and capacity to teach, counsel, administrate, and relate to people provided a place at Bethel Chapel in Barquisimeto for Scandinavian independent missionaries, independent evangelists, and a new generation of Venezuelan pastors to find unity and support while hosting national conventions and retreats, preaching, and leading Bible studies.

When it was time to complete his term as missionary in 1947, Bender praised the Venezuelan people who had joined with him and his wife Christine in an adventure of faith. After leaving, he continued in communication with Venezuelan Pentecostals, particularly those at the Bethel congregation. Christine returned to Barquisimeto in 1964, three years after his death, and received the love and admiration of many sisters and brothers from different parts of

was very instrumental in the initial contacts between the UEPV and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico and the United States.

436 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 86-87.

437 Many pastors of the UEPV were graduates of this Assemblies of God Institute. Domingo Lugo and the deceased Raimundo Arrieche and Braudelina Canelón, all graduates of the *Instituto*, have expressed mixed feelings about theological education at the *Instituto*. It was very “fundamentalist,” formal, and rigid in both content and style, but they received many skills and a good discipline to study and read. All of them became founding members of the UEPV.

438 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 88.

439 Ramón Castillo, “*Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana*,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 11.

440 Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, Holy Week, 1977.

441 Ibid.

the country. Bender had been saddened to learn that divisions and dissensions had erupted among Venezuelan Pentecostals in the 1950's, but he did not make any judgment about those decisions. All over Venezuela the Benders are recognized to this day as pioneer missionaries of the Pentecostal movement in the country.⁴⁴²

The pioneer Pentecostal missionaries to Venezuela are Gerardo A. Bially and his wife Carrie, although they came initially as missionaries of the Christian Missionary Alliance. They arrived in Caracas on February 1897. Bially was a representative of the American Bible Society. Federico Bullen joined the Biallys in 1909 and founded the Bible Institute Hebron in Caracas, becoming its first director. Federico Bullen, then invited his friend Gottfried (Godofredo) Bender who joined them in February 1914.

By 1914 Bially received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Leaders of the Christian Missionary Alliance were not sympathetic with these tendencies and Bially decided to form a "Confraternidad Pentecostal" (a Pentecostal Fellowship) with the congregations he established already in La Guaria, Los Teques, and Caracas. Bially left the Christian Missionary Alliance. Bender and the Eddings joined Bially. The new church was named the Missionary and Apostolic Church of Venezuela. Adah Winger, an Assemblies of God missionary, arrived in Caracas and directed a primary school and orphanage in Caracas. The Benders went to Barquisimeto in 1919 and the Eddings went to Isla Margarita in 1917.⁴⁴³

Bender was an independent missionary for more than two decades (1914-1937), even though he was an ordained pastor in the Assemblies of God in the United States. He remained faithful to this church all his life.

A New Church Is Born

On January 12, 1957, eleven pastors decided to leave the Assemblies of God and found the *Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana*. Its first Convention was held in *Santa Bárbara del Julia* church, August 6-11, 1957.⁴⁴⁴

These eleven pastors wrote a letter stating their determination to become a national, autonomous movement of pentecostal churches and circulated it among newspapers and churches that were related to G. F. Bender. The idea of constituting a general assembly of pentecostal churches was expressed in the 1940's, and now in 1957 these pastors wanted invite other churches to this effort of unity.⁴⁴⁵

Freddie Briceño, pastor for many years in the Venezuelan states of Zulia and Maracaibo, confirmed that between 1947 and 1953 a group of pastors belonging to the Assemblies of God

442 Christine Bender, "Gospel Trailblazer: The Story of G. F. Bender, Pioneer Missionary in Venezuela" in XV Parts, *Bread of Life* (Jan.-June 1967; continued by Gordon P. Gardiner, July 1967 – March 1968), n.p.

443 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 72-25. See also Bender's account of some of these events, particularly their separation from the Christian Missionary Alliance in 1914, in G. F. Bender "The Pentecostal Work in Venezuela, *The Weekly Evangel*, February 1918, 10.

444 Ramón Castillo, "Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana," in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 11-12.

445 *El informador pentecostal*, 1 (1), (March 1957), 1, 3.

wanted to explore more flexibility of organization. Under the leadership of Exeario Sosa these pastors established a “convention” within the Assemblies of God, which resulted in conflict and finally schism. Briceño pointed out that prior to joining with the Assemblies of God in 1947, the pentecostal churches established within the “Bender movement” had been open to dialogue with other denominations and had participated in the United Convention, a council of independent churches.⁴⁴⁶ In March of 1957, *El Informador Pentecostal*, the national journal of the UEPV, reprinted a copy of the letter circulated in 1946 as well as a new letter signed by Exeario Sosa as newly elected national president of the UEPV. This second letter expressed that this movement was based on the Gospel and the Bible and was “a movement, not an organization” (translation mine) that respects local autonomy of the congregations. Sosa’s letter emphasized his hope that UEPV should share “the powerful message” of the Gospel with poor people in their own situations, should promote cooperation among different denominations, and should proclaim God’s kingdom to all of Venezuela. He saw in this movement the fulfillment of Bender’s dreams of a national, genuine, ecumenical, and pentecostal church.⁴⁴⁷

When G. F. and Christine Bender decided to leave Venezuela in 1947, they felt that an important phase of their ministry in Venezuela had been fulfilled.⁴⁴⁸ According to Sosa, Bender was the incarnation of love and forgiveness. Bender never complained nor made any reference to disagreements with the Assemblies of God, but Exeario Sosa knew that tensions had been mounting.⁴⁴⁹ When he left Venezuela, Bender encouraged the churches he served as missionary and mentor to join the Assemblies of God, and they followed his advice. According to David Bundy, by the time Sosa became Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Venezuela,⁴⁵⁰ “the Venezuela pastors were suddenly no longer involved in any significant way in the decisions about the pentecostal church in Venezuela. Most of the major decisions were made in Springfield, MO, or in the meetings of missionaries in Venezuela.”⁴⁵¹ When the group of pastors and local congregations led by Sosa decided to separate from the Assemblies of God, it was clear that they wanted to be recognized as Venezuelan leaders capable of giving direction to their own national church.

A detailed analysis of all reports, sermons, missionary notes, and articles written by G. F. Bender in the *Pentecostal Evangel* and the *Latter Rain Evangel* between 1915 and 1968 show that there is not a single reference to any crisis or confrontation within the Assemblies of God during the Benders’ tenure as missionaries. Among those documents is an empty folder with the following note: “Bender, Gottfried F., 8-2-10-63. Deceased Minister File (Exec. Files).” The explanation given at the Flower Heritage Center is that the documents in that folder are confidential and not available for research. Thus no official public record exists of the separation

446 Ibid.

447 Ibid.

448 Ramón Castillo, “Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 7.

449 Exeario Sosa, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, December 1978, Santa Bárbara del Zulia.

450 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 86-87.

451 David Bundy, “Venezuela,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 280.

of the national pastors from the Assemblies of God.

All Assemblies of God executives and missionaries from that period are now deceased. The writer of this dissertation is unable to find any other primary source of opinions from the perspective of the Assemblies of God in the United States about the national pastors' separating from the Assemblies of God in Venezuela to establish the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in 1957. The only written reference about any conflict within the Assemblies of God in Venezuela is offered by Luisa Jeter de Walker. She mentions dissensions and divisions that provoked three leaders, all superintendents of the Assemblies of God in the 1940s and 1950s, to depart from the Assemblies of God to form their own denominations. Sacramento Cobos, pastor in Maracaibo, founded the Pentecostal Church "The Cross" with fifty congregations. Ingve and Ruth Olson established their own church *Las Acacias* in Caracas in 1954. Exeario Sosa and a group of pastors founded the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in 1957. De Walker makes the following statement: "Later on [the UEPV] they joined the Disciples of Christ" (translation mine).⁴⁵²

According to Luis Jeter de Walker the Assemblies of God in Venezuela has suffered too many dissensions and divisions. These conflicts were generally related not to doctrinal differences but "to issues about **the governance of the church** (emphasis mine) and the norms pertaining to dress, the hair and that kind of thing."⁴⁵³

The first Convention of the UEPV organized the work of women and youth into two organizations that became pillars of the UEPV: *Unión Misionera Femenil (UMIFE)* and *Unión Juvenil Imitadores de Cristo (UJIC)*.⁴⁵⁴ These two organizations continued to carry out the radical social commitment of the Benders and the relentless ecumenical spirit of Exeario Sosa.

When the UEPV was founded in 1957, a new perspective was introduced in Venezuelan pentecostalism. For the first time an ecumenical mission was combined with a pentecostal faith, manifested in ecumenical partnership and encounters, with public solidarity in favor of peace and justice, assistance for the poor, and a real concern for the Venezuelan people.⁴⁵⁵ The UEPV invested all its efforts, energy, and resources to this process during the next three decades. From the 1957 Conference in Santa Bárbara through the 1987 Valencia Conference, the UEPV made significant progress combining a liberating Spirit with an ecumenical commitment and praxis of mission and evangelism. UEPV developed a strategy of mission in a series of documents, letters, and statements articulating the life and ministry of the UEPV.

In 1963 Freddie Briceño wrote a short statement to help the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Puerto Rico to understand the identity and ministry of UEPV. The main point of his statement is twofold: the UEPV is a tolerant and open movement and is willing to work in cooperation with other denominations to promote Christian unity.⁴⁵⁶

452 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 91-92.

453 Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y cosecha*, vol. 3, 107.

454 *El informador pentecostal*, 1 (5) (September 1957), 1, 3.

455 Ramón Castillo, "Breve reseña histórica de la Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana," in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 13.

456 Freddie Briceño, "Mi visión de la UEPV a los primeros siete años de fundada," in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, (Maracaibo, Venezuela: Ediciones UEPV, 1997), 15.

The Venezuelan Evangelical Pentecostal Union was founded on three fundamental objectives: to promote fellowship between congregations and pastors, to respect the local autonomy of each congregation, and to encourage mutual support in Christian service. The UEPV rejoined the independent United Convention and expressed no hard feelings toward the Assemblies of God in Venezuela. The Assemblies of God, however, and particularly the missionaries, were negative about entering into close relationship with this new movement. The notable exception to this ambivalence was Rev. Edmundo Jordán, a Puerto Rican missionary who supported the movement in many ways from the very beginning and became a counselor and confidante to all of them.⁴⁵⁷

Briceño insists that the UEPV maintained the same doctrinal principles they had observed as members of the Assemblies of God, with the addition of three: a practical sense of tolerance, local autonomy, and a fellowship with other denominations.⁴⁵⁸

Briceño enumerates some basic doctrinal principles of the UEPV as:

Baptism by immersion, tithing, the gifts and baptism in the Holy Spirit, divine healing, open communion, fellowship with other churches, veils for women in worship, strict ethical principles (no movies, no dance, etc.), freedom to express politically diverse ideologies, official abstention from party politics, unity not uniformity among the congregations.⁴⁵⁹

Briceño was very influential in developing a close relationship between the UEPV and the Disciples of Christ in the United States and Puerto Rico. His close friendship with Edmundo Jordán paved the way for a relationship between the Venezuelan church and Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico then later with the Disciples in the United States. Briceño later collaborated with the first Disciples of Christ missionary Juan Marcos Rivera. Briceño was part of the official delegation of UEPV leaders to the World Convention of the Churches of Christ in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in August of 1965.⁴⁶⁰ Rivera wrote the following remarks after many years of hard work and friendship with Freddie Briceño:

Freddie is a pastor by calling. He does not have a formal education, but he has educated himself well. He is excellent as a pastoral counselor. He is capable of understanding the needs of others...His abilities are consecrated to loving service and to a sense of justice.⁴⁶¹

Toward an Ecumenical Vocation

As early as 1947, Exeario Sosa had a dream of creating a school to train leaders for the rural areas of Venezuela. He bought a piece of land in Barquisimeto with offerings from the Disciples of Christ churches in Puerto Rico, and in 1958 the *Curso Bíblico Intensivo* (CBI)

457 Ibid. See also Luis F. Del Pilar, *Lo hizo El: Testimonios I* (Bayamón, Puerto Rico: Impresas Quintana, 1999), 149-153.

458 Ibid.

459 Ibid., 16.

460 In the next chapter, "Partnership in Mission," the author makes a complete analysis of this "Puerto Rican connection" with the UEPV.

461 Juan Marcos Rivera, *Letters to Jesus*, trans. Mirta Rivera (St. Louis, MO: CBP, 1990), 26.

began its work there as a program of intensive biblical studies for lay pastors. This course eventually transformed into CEPAS, the Center for Pastoral Education designed by the Latin American Biblical Seminary of Costa Rica. The buildings first used for the Bible studies proved insufficient, so a joint effort was launched by national leaders of the UEPV and a delegation of Disciples of Christ leaders from the United States to construct a new building, the Bender Center, that was dedicated in 1967 and named after G. F. Bender for his dream of and work toward ecumenical mission for the poor and the orphans and education for church leadership.

After a decade of discussion and reflection between 1957 and 1967, a series of consultations, theological reflections, and analyses with ecumenical agencies including the World Council of Churches, ISAL, CELADE, Evangelical Christian Aid, and the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico and the United States opened new possibilities for a more ambitious project. In 1972 a group of leaders from Presbyterian churches in Venezuela, youth groups from the community in Barquisimeto, and community educators were active participants in the *Consulta-Encuentro*. This *Consulta* brought together ecumenical agencies from Latin America, Europe, and the United States to analyze the social, economic, and spiritual conditions of the area. Theological reflection revealed that an incarnational project by the church, as “salt and light” in the world, was essential to ministry in Venezuela.⁴⁶²

The *Consulta-Encuentro* drafted and recommended a program originally conceived by the Administrative Board of the UEPV to address these needs in Venezuela. The following general objectives and specific projects were recommended:

1. to serve the whole community, primarily the rural areas, with the liberating news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. to establish a center for community education, primarily for children and youth
3. to provide a primary school, community development, a house for the needy (particularly for the many orphans) , and rural development
4. to function as an evangelistic effort of the UEPV⁴⁶³

The *Consulta* participants worked to address the need for education among the people of Venezuela by developing initial ideas for a curriculum of integrated Christian education.⁴⁶⁴ An open dialogue with youth leaders from the Barquisimeto community provided a larger framework for effective dialogue with secular sectors.⁴⁶⁵ They decided to transform a local public school⁴⁶⁶ into a community center⁴⁶⁷ that offered multiple services in order to provide an effective ministry.⁴⁶⁸

The document that summarizes the strategy and mission of this UEPV project during this time was the *Consulta-Encuentro, Escuela Granja G. F. Bender, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, Junio 5-16, 1972*. The *Escuela-Granja* Center was initially intended as a house for poor children and

462 Ibid., 8-9.

463 Ibid., 13-18.

464 Ibid., 9-11.

465 Ibid., 10.

466 *Consulta-Encuentro, Escuela-Granja G. F. Bender, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, (June 5-16, 1972)*, 1-4.

467 Ibid., 27.

468 Ibid., 5-8.

training center for peasants in the rural areas. The Center developed three main programs to fill those needs: a primary school for poor children, a house for orphaned children, and a center for intensive biblical studies.⁴⁶⁹ It soon became known as the Bender Center.

The Bender Center project helped to fulfill Sosa's dream of helping the poor, marginalized children of the area, many of whom were orphans.⁴⁷⁰ He remembered that G. F. Bender had been an orphan, and Sosa's wife Amelia Rodríguez was an orphan raised and educated by pentecostal missionaries in the *Hogar de Paz* orphanage in Caracas.⁴⁷¹ As the daughter of a single mother, she had a "sinful status," according to the missionaries' way of thinking. She developed an inferiority complex because of this attitude but overcame over the years those dramatic experiences.⁴⁷² Amelia Rodríguez became a pastor, musician, and key leader at the national level of the UMIFE. Her own personal testimony is that serving God in the church has been a privilege and a blessing. She emphasized that serving others, particularly children, is the best way to serve God.⁴⁷³ Sosa himself also had a difficult childhood, moving from one place to another in the Venezuelan territory because of economic conditions.⁴⁷⁴

Juan Marcos Rivera raised some crucial questions to Sosa regarding the ethical and theological implications of the Community Center project. Is it social service or a different way to evangelize? "How do you relate these two?" For Exeario Sosa, both service and evangelism were essential to the proclamation of the Gospel. "Christ came to liberate the whole human person."⁴⁷⁵ Sosa encountered many criticisms about his social and political involvements. He was an avid reader of progressive theological thinkers, including liberation theologians. He demonstrated a capacity to integrate social action, theological reflection, and ecumenical cooperation in a nationalistic and pentecostal project.

Juan Marcos Rivera interviewed Exeario Sosa on March 12, 1979, and asked specifically about some pictures in the door of Sosa's office: G. F. Bender, for whom Sosa expresses deep appreciation,⁴⁷⁶ and Rómulo Gallegos, the famous Venezuelan novelist and former president of Venezuela. "He is a literary symbol; politically he was my comrade because he was president of the party in which I participated. But he is not there for politics, but for his condition as man of

469 Ibid., 28-29.

470 Juan Marcos Rivera, "Testimonio pastoral y educativo de la UEPV," *Entrevista al Rev. Exeario Sosa Luján, 12 de marzo de 1979*, typed manuscript, 26. The original copy of this important document was discovered by the author in the personal files of the late Rev. Juan Marcos Rivera in the summer of 1998.

471 For an interesting personal testimony shared by Amelia Rodríguez, see "Amelia de Sosa," in *Testimonios Ier.*, ed. *Encuentro de Mujeres Cristianas, Colonia Tovar*, Caracas, Venezuela (September 16-18, 1983), 25-31.

472 Ibid., 29.

473 Ibid., 29-31.

474 Exeario Sosa and his family shared many stories about the church and its leaders throughout the years. Exeario Sosa had a deep admiration for G. F. Bender and tried to emulate and enable his dreams, visions and projects.

475 Ibid.

476 Juan Marcos Rivera, "Testimonio pastoral y educativo de la UEPV," 25.

letters.”⁴⁷⁷

Juan Marcos Rivera paid a posthumous tribute to Exeario Sosa at his tomb and wrote this lasting testimony:

Ay bendito Jesus! Exeario left us when we least expected it. That one was a true man! A trunk of sweet *guayabo*, a blossom of *araguaney*, a branch of *cuji*, a shoot of rice, a cob of sweet corn, a field of sesame, threshing machine of a wounded fatherland.

Pastor Pure [Sosa’s nickname] was like the *frailejon* growing on the frozen cliffs, which bloom in winter, when the cold has already destroyed all other vegetation. He was a most loving father, hard like a rock and tender like the song of the *turpial* in springtime.

Have a good journey, dear pastor. May God go with you, and we will be seeing each other around one of these days, with Jesus, on the road.⁴⁷⁸

Toward an Integral Spiritual Formation

Elida Quevedo offered some important observations about the pastoral and educational ministry of the UEPV. According to Quevedo, the UEPV from the very beginning demonstrated an eagerness to explore new educational experiences, and G. F. Bender was the initial inspiration of this enthusiasm. Quevedo noted that Bender’s ministry had a deep educational component, along with an evangelical commitment and a dimension of solidarity and cooperation. Bender developed a strategy in which the founding of schools, Bible institutes, and orphanages was integrated within a pastoral model. Bender was very sensitive to the need for qualified and trained national leadership.⁴⁷⁹

Exeario Sosa inherited Bender's idea and vision. The UEPV under Sosa’s leadership developed a strategy for education that included intensive biblical studies, education for poor children and orphans, and a process toward an *educación popular* for the people. The UEPV provided a transforming education from the perspective of the Christian faith.⁴⁸⁰ Many local congregations implemented this same educational strategy. The *Cristo la Peña de Horeb* congregation in Acarigua, Portuguesa, started a school for its community that made an impact in the public school system and became a model for future schools. In Mesa Alta a primary school was established that also became a model for the community, as well as a public witness of proclamation of the Good News.⁴⁸¹

The UEPV confronted many internal conflicts and tensions, like any church or institution. Many of the crucial issues arose from the ecumenical and theological determinations made during the first two decades of its existence. Exeario Sosa was convinced that new leadership was desperately needed, but it was very difficult for him to allow that leadership to emerge. He knew that education was a key component for strong leadership.

During February of 1977 several ecumenical organizations cooperated to provide education for church leadership by sending Carmelo E. Álvarez and Raquel Rodríguez,

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Juan Marcos Rivera, *Letters to Jesus*, 31.

⁴⁷⁹ Elida Quevedo, “El ministerio pastoral y educativo de la UEPV,” in *Pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, *Presencia* 31-32.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 34.

Associate Overseas Staff teaching staff members from the Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica, to teach at the Bender Center's CBI. The main purpose of their work was to reorganize the program, design a curriculum for lay pastors, coordinate the new courses, and provide books.⁴⁸² The organizations joining in sponsorship of Álvarez and Rodríguez were the DOM and the Men's Department of the DHM of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, UNELAM, and the Latin American Biblical Seminary. In addition, the UEPV provided local transportation and room and board. Álvarez led intensive courses for CBI students on pastoral theology, preaching, Christian worship, and I and II Peter. In 1978 a reading program was designed by the Executive Committee of the UEPV using guidelines provided by PRODIADIS, *Programa Diversificado a Distancia*, the distance education program of the Biblical University of Costa Rica established in 1977 by the Latin American Biblical Seminary.

José Erazo, a fraternal worker and for many years pastor in Puerto Rico, was sponsored by the DOM to collaborate with Exeario Sosa by preaching, teaching at CBI, and supervising the national work of the denomination. Samuel Soliván, an Assemblies of God teacher from New York, was sponsored by the Reformed Church in America and dedicated his time to teaching. Soliván was a Puerto Rican Ph.D. candidate at Union Seminary in New York.⁴⁸³

Leadership Development: Empowering the Church

The year 1978 was a transitional time for the UEPV. Exeario Sosa was feeling the burden of the presidency of UEPV, and he developed a heart condition that began limiting his activity. He was concerned about the future. Sosa had tried in the past to train new leaders but had failed.⁴⁸⁴ By the end of 1978 a decision was made. Under the guidance and supervision of Carmelo E. Álvarez and Raquel Rodríguez, several students were sent to the Latin American Biblical Seminary of Costa Rica to be trained as leaders. They were to return to the UEPV, without having lost "their pentecostal identity,"⁴⁸⁵ to teach and mentor lay pastors and younger candidates for ministry. Between 1978 and 1985, graduates of the Latin American Biblical Seminary include: Gamaliel Lugo (Presiding Bishop of the UEPV since 1983), Elida Quevedo Lugo (Dean of *Programa Abierto de Educación Teológica*-PACTO and national president of UMIFE), his wife, Ingrid González, José Amesty (currently the vice-president of UEPV and director of the CEPAS program), and Melech Escalante (Director of PACTO during the late 1980s). All of them are actively involved in the UEPV and are directing its theological education programs at all levels.

⁴⁸² Domingo Lugo, "Días inolvidables," in *El informador pentecostal* XIV (February 1977), 2-3.

⁴⁸³ Samuel Soliván worked for three years in Venezuela, 1977-1980. He was accepted by pastors and lay leaders of the UEPV as a diligent, committed teacher and pastor.

⁴⁸⁴ In the 1960s two students were sent to the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, supported by scholarships from the DOM. These candidates did not fulfill the expectations and were unable to lead a theological education program. Sosa and the Executive Committee were aware of the situation and wanted to find a solution.

⁴⁸⁵ These are the exact words used by Exeario Sosa in an Executive Committee meeting in Barquisimeto, December 1978.

Women in Ecumenical Leadership

Two women, in particular, have played pivotal roles in the leadership of UEPV. Vicenta de Uzcátegui has been a pastor in the UEPV for forty-seven years. She is the widow of the late Gregorio Uzcátegui, pastor, composer, and one of the founders of the UEPV. Vicenta de Uzcátegui started her ministry very young; immediately after baptism at age fourteen, she was called to be a pastor and accepted the call with enthusiasm,⁴⁸⁶ and Exeario Sosa became her mentor and spiritual leader. She confronted strong opposition from the male elders in the congregation but was able to win them over through a persuasive and conciliatory attitude.⁴⁸⁷ When she married Pastor Gregorio Uzcátegui, they became a pastoral team and worked together in several congregations. She also was sole pastor in three congregations.⁴⁸⁸ Under her leadership these congregations worked actively in the community in projects of social action, primarily with women.⁴⁸⁹ Vicenta de Uzcátegui has been a pastor among the indigenous congregations of the UEPV and received the enthusiastic acceptance of these congregations. Unfortunately, she did not get the opportunity of a formal education in the *Curso Bíblico Intensivo* at the Bender Center. The author has had long conversations over the years with de Uzcátegui and can testify that she is a brilliant and self-taught person with a good theological mind and the heart of a compassionate pastor. During an interview in San Bárbara in August of 2002, she made the following statement: “Brother Carmelo, I have been in pastoral ministry all these years and rejoice in the conviction that God has blessed my ministry in many ways. This is my life, a life in ministry.”⁴⁹⁰

Like Uzcátegui, ordained UEPV minister Elizabeth Nieves de Avila married Rev. José Avila and shared with him in various pastorates until his death in 1983. The biggest challenge of her life was continuing alone after his death as pastor of Gethsemane in Maracay, in the Aragua district of Venezuela, in the very congregation they had founded together. She accepted the challenge and was confirmed by the congregation as their pastor with joy and enthusiastic support.⁴⁹¹ Elizabeth de Avila not only became the leader of that local congregation but also served as regional coordinator in the central region of the UEPV. She has been member of the UEPV Executive Committee as well as Vice-President of the national church. All of her children are leaders in the local congregation and in the UJIC, the national youth association of the UEPV. In addition to her continuing ministry at Gethsemane, she is also an active member of the women’s association UMIFE.⁴⁹² When asked how she dealt with the challenge of replacing her husband as senior pastor of the Gethsemane congregation, she expressed that initially she met with strong opposition from some of the male leaders in the congregation. The support of an important group of women leaders in the congregation was crucial in affirming her leadership and role as a female pastor. She has worked tirelessly to build a new sanctuary, to consolidate

486 Vicenta de Uzcátegui, *Testimonios, Ier., ed. Encuentro de Mujeres Cristianas*, 13.

487 Ibid., 13-14.

488 Ibid.

489 Ibid.

490 Vicenta de Uzcátegui, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, La Zarza Ardiendo, Santa Bárbara del Zulia, August 2002.

491 Elizabeth de Avila, *Testimonios, Ier., ed. Encuentro de Mujeres Cristianas*, 3-4.

492 Ibid., 6-8.

the spiritual and worship experience of the congregation, and to manage financial matters.⁴⁹³ Elizabeth de Avila succeeded in developing a model of female pastor that combined the charismatic, the organizational, and the strategic. Under her leadership and vision, both the local congregation and the national church have received her loyal and consistent pastoral ministry.

Mission and Unity in the Power of the Spirit

The next important milestone for the UEPV came as a response to an economic crisis in Venezuela as the oil industry strengthened the national oligarchy and the bureaucratic elite in government while further oppressing the poor people. The UEPV sent an open letter, *la Carta de Valencia*, from San Cristóbal, July 28, 1978, stating that in such times of crisis, the church must respond with “Christian solutions” to the economic, social, and political conditions of the “marginal classes.”⁴⁹⁴ The letter affirmed that a joint effort of pentecostal leaders was needed to respond to the needs of the people and to promote the unity among pentecostals in both countries. In the spirit of the Bolivarian ideal of a “Great Colombia” federation of Latin American nations, the UEPV invited Venezuelan and Colombian pentecostal leaders to convene the I Pentecostal Bolivarian Congress in Bogotá, March 14-18, 1979.

The main objectives of the I Bolivarian Congress were to establish a dialogue among the pentecostal people and church leaders of Venezuela and Colombia, to develop an integral approach to mission, and to respond to their common economic crisis.⁴⁹⁵

The Congress discussed several themes and issues facing the church. Evangelistic strategies needed to become more relevant to the challenge and crisis in Latin America. The pentecostal churches were growing, but they had been indifferent to the crisis. The churches were called to unity and to concrete action to confront injustice as demanded by God. The pentecostal churches had a unique opportunity to serve as the “church of the poor” and to be prophetic to the rich and powerful who needed to recognize their own spiritual poverty that generated so many crises. An integral evangelism could serve as the answer to these crises.⁴⁹⁶ Churches should not remain silent in the face of injustice and need. The patriarchal model, so pervasive in both society and the church, needed to be confronted. The pentecostal churches had a unique responsibility to be faithful and witness to the Gospel. Each pentecostal believer must also testify and be committed to the Gospel.⁴⁹⁷

A New Crisis of Identity and Mission

The years between 1979 and 1983 were rife with confrontation at many levels in Latin America. The violation of human rights so rampant during those years, along with the economic and political crises, affected both the society and the leadership in all the churches.

The UEPV suffered an additional crisis as well. Many congregations reacted negatively to the progressive positions taken by Exeario Sosa and the Executive Committee. The influence

493 Ibid., 8-10.

494 “*Carta de San Cristóbal*,” *Comisión de Fraternidad Evangélica Pentecostal Bolivariana*, (July 28, 1978), 1.

495 Ibid., 2.

496 *I Congreso Pentecostal Bolivariano*, (March 14-18, 1979), 1.

497 Ibid., 2-3.

of liberation theology on CLAI, as churches took on a more prophetic role in defending human rights, increased its viability as an ecumenical body for Protestants in Latin America. Exeario Sosa passed away on June 18, 1981--a deeply painful loss for the UEPV and its leadership.⁴⁹⁸ Vice President Angel Bravo assumed the presidency for two years, but many local congregations felt a void of leadership and chose to part ways with the UEPV. Others left because of theological and political discrepancies. "In 1969 the UEPV registered a membership of baptized members of 2,200 with 40 local pastors, 47 established local congregations and 18 mission posts. The next report of March 1970 shows 61 congregations with 2,500 baptized members with 50 local pastors and 10 mission posts. At the end of 1980 the UEPV reflected a membership of 3,000 baptized members, 55 pastors with 68 congregations and 12 mission posts. Around fifty local congregations with their mission posts left the UEPV between 1981 and 1983."⁴⁹⁹ The UEPV was left with a membership of merely eighteen local congregations as it convened for its XXVII Convention, August 25-28, 1983. Gamaliel Lugo, a pastor from Maracaibo, Venezuela, and 1980 graduate of the Latin American Biblical Seminary, was elected president, and he immediately demonstrated the capacity to shepherd the flock as well as the administrative skills to reorganize the UEPV.⁵⁰⁰

Mission and Unity: Discerning the Signs of the Times

Gamaliel Lugo and the Executive Committee of the UEPV decided that a process of discernment on ecumenism was desperately needed in the UEPV. The process started in 1984 as a joint effort between the Caribbean Regional office of CLAI and the UEPV. Juan Marcos Rivera and Carmelo E. Álvarez were invited to lead workshops on Christian unity in different parts of Venezuela. They preached and lectured during the UEPV Convention XXVIII in Las Marías in August of 1984. During the following two years, UEPV leaders planned an educational process on ecumenism for the churches.

The XXIX UEPV Convention was held in *Los Efesios* Church in San Juan de Menegrande in August of 1985 with a main theme of "*Misión, Crecimiento y Unidad*." The three lectures delivered by Carmelo E. Álvarez emphasized church growth as a multifaceted process that called the church to be a witness of unity in the world.⁵⁰¹ The XXX Convention "The Ecumenical Vocation of the Church" in 1986 was held at Hosanna Church in Guanare, in the state of Portuguesa, Venezuela. Álvarez delivered three Bible studies on "Ecumenical Vocation,"

498 Melitón Lugo Carrasquero, *Un Presidente sin parangón: Exeario Sosa Luján* (Maracaibo, Venezuela: Ediciones UEPV, 1986), 45-47.

499 Juan Marcos Rivera, *The UCMS Statistical Report*, Venezuela, March 5, 1969, and March 7, 1970. For the 1980 statistics, see "DOM Report, Appendix A," in *Yearbook 1983*, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

500 Gamaliel Lugo, "La UEPV: Identidad, compromiso y misión," in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 49-58. Lugo is able to identify the roots of the UEPV and gives a solid biblical and theological analysis. For twenty years he has provided such reflection for the UEPV, CLAI, and CEPLA.

501 The original pamphlet was published by CLAI in 1985 under the same title. A revised version of these lectures is included in Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Una iglesia en diáspora: Apuntes para una eclesiología solidaria* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1991), 31-37.

and a Symposium was organized with guests from the Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Disciple of Christ Protestant traditions.⁵⁰²

An Ecumenical Commitment

The UEPV was ready to move toward its next step. At the 1987 XXXI Convention in *Comunidad Cristiana El Triunfo*, Valencia, the emphasis was on “Evangelism in Today’s World.” The debate was focused on two important issues from the Executive Committee’s document *Carta de Valencia*: the ecumenical vocation of the UEPV, and ministry to the poor. The document itself was a testimony to the quality and depth of theological reflection within the UEPV and showed a mature theological stance.⁵⁰³

This document, *Carta de Valencia*, was an attempt to express the official position of the UEPV in these matters:

Today more than ever we want to affirm, and with the same force as in the past, in our unbreakable faith in Jesus Christ and our commitment with the Gospel and life.⁵⁰⁴

The beginning of the document addressed false accusations levied by conservative evangelical and conservative pentecostal churches against UEPV newspapers, seminars, lectures, conferences, and Bible institutes as they promoted unity and justice.

The document clarified the “reaffirmation of our pentecostal identity.”⁵⁰⁵ The UEPV’s ecumenical partnerships with Disciples of Christ, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, and other Christian confessions did not negate its pentecostal roots, nor did it require those other denominations to compromise their own traditions. The ecumenical relationship was based in a mutual respect and recognition.

The *Carta de Valencia* affirmed the UEPV belief in “the ecumenical spirit,” “interconfessional dialog,” and “mutual cooperation.” It affirmed the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith based in the Trinity, with an emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are given to the community of faith to fulfill Christ’s command to for the establishment of His kingdom. The Holy Spirit calls the church to unity.

The document noted that the UEPV had been open to an “ecclesial praxis” that was an “ecumenical pastoral praxis” and that for more than twenty years this praxis had actually taken place. When a fraternal relationship began with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the UEPV also developed ongoing relationships with other churches in and outside of Venezuela.⁵⁰⁶ This praxis was visibly expressed by the UEPV’s active membership in CLAI, CELADEC, Latin American Biblical Seminary, DEI, Ecumenical Action in Venezuela, Evangelical Committee for Justice of Venezuela (CEVEJ), and others.⁵⁰⁷

The document concluded by acknowledging that the UEPV was “a believing and poor

502 Recorded cassette, *Symposium*: “Ecumenical Vocation,” UEPV National Convention, Guanare, *Estado Portuguesa*, August 1986.

503 *La Carta de Valencia*, UEPV (August 29, 1987).

504 Ibid.

505 Ibid., 2.

506 Ibid., 3.

507 Ibid.

people.” It analyzed the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, pointing out the violence, repression, suffering, hunger, death, and misery. The circumstances of the Goajira Indians, the peasants of Caño Caimán, and the suffering in the slums were mentioned as examples of the violation of human rights in Venezuela.⁵⁰⁸ The document proclaimed that the defense of life in all its manifestations is a fundamental right proclaimed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ministry to the poor is an exhortation in Luke 4:18-19 and is a challenge to the Church Universal and to the UEPV in particular.⁵⁰⁹

The UEPV has developed in its forty-two years a strategy for mission that is rooted in the power of the liberating Spirit. UEPV leaders also have articulated a pertinent theology of mission based on the following elements, affirmed in 1997 during the 40th anniversary of the formation of the UEPV:⁵¹⁰

1. A Christian education that is both character forming and socially transforming⁵¹¹
2. An ecumenical vocation that is both a commitment to Christian unity and a solidarity with the people⁵¹²
3. An integral mission that is personal, communal, and structural⁵¹³
4. A spirituality that is for the healing of the body, the church, the nation, and the world.⁵¹⁴
5. The conviction that the Holy Spirit is both sign and power of the coming of God’s reign in all its fullness⁵¹⁵

The UEPV continues to strengthen its strategy in mission in four key areas: leadership development, Christian education for the whole church, self-sufficiency, socio-economic projects, and ecumenical and public witness.

Conclusions

The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela started as a movement of local churches that desired to reclaim their roots in the pentecostal tradition and to retain an autonomous and autochthonous movement while entering into service with other religious organizations. A

508 Gamaliel Lugo, “*Ética social pentecostal: Santidad comprometida*,” in *Pentecostalismo y liberación: Una experiencia latinoamericana*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez, 113-122.

509 *La Carta de Valencia*, 4.

510 “*La UEPV: Principios generales y objetivos*,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo (Maracaibo, Venezuela: Ediciones UEPV, 1997), 59-62.

511 Gamaliel Lugo, “*La UEPV: Identidad compromiso y misión*,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, 53.

512 Carmelo E. Álvarez, “*La vocación ecuménica de la UEPV*,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 42-47.

513 “*La UEPV: Principios generales y objetivos*,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, ed. Gamaliel Lugo, 60.

514 Ibid., 61. See also Gamaliel Lugo, “*Ética social pentecostal: Santidad comprometida*,” in *Pentecostalismo y liberación*, ed. Carmelo E. Álvarez, 120.

515 Gamaliel Lugo, “*La UEPV: Identidad, compromiso y misión*,” in *Presencia pentecostal en Venezuela*, 53-58.

crucial decision was made to separate from the Assemblies of God, and a new pentecostal church was born: the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. After the initial steps to organize a new church, the UEPV started a process which led to an ecumenical vocation manifested in concrete projects of social action and ecumenical relationships.

One of the key aspects that nurtured and directed UEPV strategy was an integral spiritual formation in which Christian education at all levels became a fundamental principle. Closely related to this dimension of spiritual formation was leadership development. The decision to train leaders was a turning point in addressing the new challenges and conflicts that lay ahead. The Church needed highly-qualified leaders to face a new situation in the country and in Latin America. The UEPV strove to live by its belief that a church empowered by the Holy Spirit is one that witnesses to and promotes Christian unity. The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela was a pioneering force in reclaiming both the Bolivarian ideal of a “Great Colombia” and the power of the Holy Spirit to respond to the socio-economic crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1979 the UEPV faced another crucial turning point in its identity and mission as it faced internal turmoil and a leadership void. Once more it was time to discern the signs of the times. A decision was made to reaffirm an ecumenical commitment in a process of discernment and education in order to fulfill UEPV’s mission as both a pentecostal and an ecumenical church.

CHAPTER VII

PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION: AN EXPERIMENT IN ECUMENICAL SHARING

The main focus of this chapter is the history and practice of ecumenical sharing between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. An attempt is made to look at the initial contacts and how the relationship progressed from an “experiment in cooperation” toward ecumenical partnership. The role of the pioneer missionaries is analyzed, stressing the importance of the missionary as educational agent and companion in mission. The initial collaboration in a fraternal attitude with Puerto Rican Disciples is also underlined as a vital catalyst to the character of the partnership between the Disciples and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. The achievements of the partnership are stressed as well as some of the challenges and questions.

Initial Contacts, 1959-1972

In 1959 Dr. A. Dale Fiers, President of the United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS), the missionary agency of the Disciples of Christ at that time, visited several Latin American countries and reported his findings to the Board of the UCMS. He emphasized seven key elements about the realities and opportunities for mission in the region:

1. Many changes are taking place in the region and there is a “new opportunity for Protestant service”
2. The churches demonstrate a “new determination” in their life and outreach and a “new awareness and alertness caused by the strategy”
3. “Educational institutions remain of strategic importance”
4. “There is a growing sense of the wholeness of the Christian enterprise”
5. “There is a need for more missionaries and new forms of missionary outreach”
6. “The barriers to missionary activity continue but they are not so effective as they once were”
7. “Latin America presents a unique and perplexing problem to the ecumenical movement... These countries are being stormed by a great task force of non-cooperative missionary movements. It was suggested that perhaps the answer is to invite the main line groups into a cooperation and the cooperative and non-cooperative missionaries into continued fellowship”⁵¹⁶

The initial contact between the Disciples of Christ and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela came through Edmundo Jordán, a former Assemblies of God missionary who worked in Venezuela in the 1930s and 1940s and became a Disciples pastor in Puerto Rico in 1955.

Edmundo Jordán was a volunteer missionary supported by the offerings of and ordained at *La Sinagoga* (called “The Synagogue” because they bought an old Jewish synagogue and transformed it into a church building) Assemblies of God church in Harlem, New York, along with his brother Manuel Jordán. He was an active member and Christian educator in this

⁵¹⁶ Dale A. Fiers, “Report of Latin American Trip,” (Indianapolis, IN: Minutes of Board of UCMS, 1959), Item 10, 4.

congregation and established the first Hispanic Bible Institute for Christian Educators in New York.⁵¹⁷ His ordination at *La Sinagoga* was recognized by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico.

Jordán never received any financial support from the headquarters of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri, and according to his daughter, “he was not appointed as a missionary by the Assemblies of God, because they just appointed gringos not Hispanics as full missionaries.” A philanthropist paid his trip from New York City to Caracas, Venezuela. He relied on love offerings that the poor brothers and sisters from *La Sinagoga* could send, and he worked as a bookkeeper with a large family while pastoring in Carora, Lara. Along with G. F. Bender, Jordán established a Bible school in Barquisimeto. He also founded a Commercial Institute in Carora and was honored and recognized by the city.⁵¹⁸

There is no reference to Jordán’s work and ministry in Venezuela in the archives of Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center in Springfield, Missouri. When Jordán came back to the United States, he pastored in New York City but was dreaming of going back to his motherland, Puerto Rico. He had a large family (16 children), yet he wanted to share his experience in Venezuela, and the Disciples of Christ offered him the opportunity to join in a successful pastoral ministry in Puerto Rico until his death in 1975. He continued all those years in contact with Assemblies of God pastors in Puerto Rico and often taught at the Mizpa Institute, Assemblies of God, in Bayamón, Puerto Rico.⁵¹⁹

Edmundo Jordán joined other Assemblies of God missionaries in meetings and retreats and was in constant communication with G. F. Bender in Barquisimeto. He was a close collaborator with Sacramento Cobos, Senior Pastor for one year at La Cruz Pentecostal Church in Maracaibo, Zulia, and was very effective as a preacher and administrator.⁵²⁰

As pastor of various congregations in the Lara and other districts of Venezuela, Jordán proved to be a very effective preacher and administrator, earning the trust of the leaders of the Pentecostal Union that endured until his death in 1980. Jordán left Venezuela in the late 1940s to pastor various Assemblies of God Hispanic congregations in New York City, one of them being the famous Macedonia Pentecostal Church in Hispanic Harlem.⁵²¹ There he met Domingo Rodríguez, Puerto Rican pastor at *La Hermosa* Christian Church, the first Disciples Hispanic congregation in the city, founded in 1937 by Pablo Cotto, also a Disciples pastor from Puerto Rico. Rodríguez and Jordán established a close friendship. Jordán subsequently became a member of the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico.

Edmundo Jordán was very interested in the possibility of a collaboration between the Disciples of Christ and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. In 1959 he was invited

517 Juan L. Lugo, *Pentecostés en Puerto Rico o la vida de un misionero*, (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1951), 99.

518 Raquel Jordán Gonzalo, “A Family for a New Millenium and Da. Aurea Jordán”, *Family Vignettes, Photocopies*, March, 2005, 1-4. Later confirmed in a telephone interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, March 2005.

519 Ibid.

520 José Inciarte, Senior Pastor, La Cruz Pentecostal Church, Maracaibo, Venezuela, Interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, August, 2001.

521 Domingo Rodríguez, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, June 12, 1997.

to the Convention of the Pentecostal Union, creating a cordial atmosphere and providing the initial contact with Puerto Rican Disciples and later with the UCMS of the Disciples of Christ.⁵²² Edmundo Jordán was invited to the next Convention in August 1960 as the guest preacher, but this time he was joined by Thomas J. Liggett, Mae Yoho Ward, and four pastors from the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba. During this Convention an initial dialog was established, leaving the doors open for more conversation and future collaboration.⁵²³

Over a period of two years the UCMS continued exploring ways in which the two denominations might concretely move into a relationship with “non-cooperative missions,” according to its assessment of those “non-ecumenical” bodies. During the next Conference of Protestant Churches in Lima, Peru, in 1961, a more open contact with pentecostal churches came into being. Active participants in this Second Conference were David du Plessis, a pentecostal leader from South Africa, and Bishop Enrique Chávez of the Pentecostal Church of Chile. Dr. Thomas J. Liggett was a notable member of the organizing commission of this Conference and delivered a keynote address on Protestant work in Latin America.⁵²⁴ This Conference was crucial in that it brought together two ecumenical leaders--Dr. Mae Yoho Ward, Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the UCMS, and Dr. Liggett, a Disciples missionary and President of the Union Seminary in Puerto Rico, as very active participants. These two leaders continued to work together to further the ecumenical process.

An important historical precedent to this process was the crisis and confrontation that the UCMS experienced in Puerto Rico in 1933. A revival spread among the Disciples congregations on the island, and the missionaries were unable to deal with the situation of distrust and lack of dialog between missionaries and national pastors. Mae Yoho Ward and Samuel Guy Inman, a Disciples missionary in Mexico who was very involved in the ecumenical movement, were able to mediate during what looked like a potential separation of the Puerto Rican Disciples from the Disciples of Christ.⁵²⁵ This experience and others that Mae Yoho Ward accumulated over the years with charismatic Disciples in Puerto Rico paved the way for an honest and open relationship with the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. When she visited and

522 Juan Marcos Rivera, *Venezuela Newsletter* (June 1963), 1-4.

523 Gregorio Uzcátegui, “*Hitos para la historia*,” unpublished manuscript, August 21, 1999, 1.

524 Thomas J. Liggett, “*La Situación Actual de la Obra Evangélica en América Latina*,” in CELA, *Cristo, la Esperanza para América Latina* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: *Confederación Evangélica del Río de la Plata*, 1962), 49-67. Liggett offers some insightful interpretations on the religious scenario in Latin America and the challenges they pose to Disciples in the United States in two articles published in *World Call*, the official missionary journal of the denomination for many years. See T. J. Liggett, “New Era Dawns in Latin America,” *World Call* (January 1962), 19-20; and T. J. Liggett, “Protestant Dilemmas in Latin America,” *World Call* (November 1964), 19-20.

525 Joaquín Vargas, *Los Discípulos de Cristo en Puerto Rico* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1988), 73-102. For an analysis of the role and reconciliation of the missionaries involved in this controversy, see Carmelo E. Álvarez and Carlos Cardoza, *Llamados a Construir el Reino: Teología y Estrategia Misionera de los Discípulos de Cristo 1899-1999* (Bayamón, Puerto Rico: *Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) en Puerto Rico*, 1999), 85-100.

preached in the first UEPV congregation *El Peregrino* in Morador, Venezuela, her message was well-received. According to the late Juan Marcos Rivera she was so fluent in Spanish that Venezuelans were thrilled and positively impressed that evening.⁵²⁶

Dr. Liggett worked in Puerto Rico between 1958 and 1966, providing leadership in theological education in Puerto Rico. His active participation in the life of local congregations among Puerto Rican Disciples is recognized to this day as that of an effective preacher and teacher, both trusted and loved. His wife, the late Virginia Liggett, was involved in the Christian Women's Fellowship among the congregations.

According to Dr. Liggett the initial contact between the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela and the Puerto Rican Disciples pastors began in 1960.⁵²⁷ Dr. Mae Yoho Ward asked Liggett to visit the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in 1963 and to explore a possible partnership between the two denominations. During his visit Liggett was impressed by the fact that this was a very poor church "without theologically trained pastors. Personal ethics were quite Puritan, but on social issues, especially land reform, they were progressive and encouraged participation in the political life of Venezuela."⁵²⁸

Dr. Liggett's report to Mae Yoho Ward and the UCMS of his visit to Venezuela in July 12-14, 1963, was both very encouraging and realistic, emphasizing the poverty and the many needs that the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela confronted. He was enthusiastic about not only the opportunity but also the potential of joining in an effective process of education, mission and unity, financial assistance, and collaboration in development programs, among others. He emphatically asserts: "This church is reaching outward and upward, it is seeking to realize its own best self but yearns for fellowship and support and guidance."⁵²⁹

Between 1959 and 1968 Latin America and the Caribbean faced critical political, social, and economic challenges. The Alliance for Progress, implemented by the U.S. Kennedy Administration (1961-1963), became the strategic policy for development and economic growth, as well as an attempt to respond to the socialist project of the Cuban revolution. For many progressive secular and religious movements, this strategy seemed like an ideology of "developmentism" that left all existing socio-political and economic institutions untouched. These churches and the social movements were concerned that without more substantial social and economic transformation, the needs of the people, a majority of whom were the poor, would not be alleviated. The documents and reports of the Conference of Churches in Lima Peru, in 1961, reflected some of those concerns, particularly the emphasis on more real changes to transform Latin American societies.

The President of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela at this time was Exeario Sosa, an active member and founder of the National League of Peasants in Lara and a Representative in the state legislature. He was very interested in a relationship with the Disciples of Christ and recommended that "a very informal pattern of fraternal fellowship and cooperation be initiated

526 Juan Marcos Rivera, telephone interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, June 11, 1997.

527 Thomas J. Liggett, "Memorandum," transcription of telephone interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez on June 11, 1997.

528 Ibid.

529 Thomas J. Liggett, Report of Visit to Churches and Leaders of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (Maracaibo) July 12-14, 1963, 5.

without any expectation that the Pentecostal Union would become a “Disciples church.”⁵³⁰ This principle was consistently maintained throughout the fraternal relationship between these two denominations.

An Experiment in Cooperation

These initial contacts, including informal visits of exploration and dialog, “led to the agreement that the Disciples [of Christ] would appoint Juan Marcos Rivera and Flor Rivera to be the first fraternal workers.”⁵³¹ Their initial two-year appointment was intended as an exploratory process aiming at deciding on a more permanent relationship. The Riveras arrived in Venezuela in August of 1963 and were welcomed in the Convention held at *Pena de Horeb* church in Maracaibo, August 26 – September 1 of that same year.⁵³² They were assigned to do teaching, counseling, to give guidance, to perform social work, to provide Christian education materials and literature, and to organize visits from delegations from Disciples congregations in the United States and Puerto Rico.⁵³³ This couple came to Venezuela with impressive experience as leaders in the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico and missionaries in Paraguay. He was a business administrator in the Puerto Rico Water Company for many years before deciding that it was time to work for the church. He accepted the job of business administrator at Union Seminary in Puerto Rico and later accepted the challenge to be a missionary in Latin America. Rivera’s wife received a Masters degree in Social Work and was very active with the Christian Women Fellowship in Puerto Rico. Both Riveras had been greatly impacted by the 1933 revival among the Puerto Rican Disciples, she at the *Ciales* Christian Church and he as a member of *El Salto* Christian Church, two congregations transformed by the charismatic experience of the *Avivamiento*, as they call it in Puerto Rico. Working with charismatic congregations and adapting to pentecostal churches in Venezuela required some effort, but they had the necessary background and experience to do it.⁵³⁴

Juan Marcos Rivera supplemented Dr. Liggett’s earlier report with a survey on the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. He combined on-site observations and his impressions after a few months as missionary. Rivera was very realistic about the many needs in different areas of Venezuelan life and demonstrated that he already was a good listener and keen observer and was willing to learn. Even after only a few months, he sounded like he had known these churches for a long time. His knowledge of Latin America in general and the Venezuelan context in particular was very accurate. The report concluded with some observations on the issues and problems that needed immediate attention. An appendix to the report shared statistics on the number of congregations, and their financial situation, membership, and pastors.⁵³⁵ In

530 Ibid.

531 Ibid.

532 Gregorio Uzcátegui, “*Hitos para la historia*,” 2.

533 Thomas J. Liggett, “Memorandum,” June, 1997.

534 Carmelo E. Álvarez and Carlos Cardoza, *Llamados a construir el reino de Dios*, 101-133. See also “New Partners in Venezuela,” *World Call* (September 1963), 26. A reference is made in this announcement to the fact that an official delegation from the UCMS attended the Convention of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela in 1960.

535 Juan Marcos Rivera, “Survey on the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela,”

1963 the UEPV reports thirty-five established congregations with ten mission posts, thirty pastors, and 1,500 baptized members. Juan Marcos Rivera summarized these early impressions as follows:

Here is the first group of responsible Christians who have extended their hands to the Christian Churches of the brotherhood (sic) of the Disciples of Christ for help. This is the first step in a 'reversal' toward Christian unity. We are hopeful that God is calling the Christian Churches for this task.⁵³⁶

The Riveras were installed as missionaries in Venezuela at the Pentecostal Union Convention in August, 1964, where they met guest preacher Rev. Florentino Santana, renowned Puerto Rican Disciples pastor who lent support to their ministry.⁵³⁷ The Riveras' first two years in Venezuela were very productive, and Juan Marcos Rivera became a close friend and confidante of Exeario Sosa, President of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela.⁵³⁸ Flor Rivera taught and helped with women's programs and in her area of expertise, social work.

The World Convention of the Churches of Christ, a fraternal gathering of churches related to the restoration movement, held its 1965 Convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico, August 9-15. The UCMS officially invited a delegation from the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela to participate in the event. The UEPV initiated a joint effort with The Disciples of Christ Churches in Puerto Rico that provided housing, meals, and a program before and after the Convention.⁵³⁹ The Disciples in Puerto Rico were delighted to host this group from Venezuela that included both pastors and lay leaders. As a response to this initial sharing between Puerto Rican Disciples and the Pentecostal Union, Rev. Carmelo Álvarez-Pérez was invited to the Annual Convention of the Pentecostal Union that immediately followed the World Convention. This visit further strengthened the relationship between the Puerto Rican Disciples and the Venezuelan pentecostals.⁵⁴⁰

Juan Marcos Rivera wrote a very succinct evaluation to Mae Yoho Ward as a background for future conversations with the Pentecostal Union encouraging bilateral relations between the two denominations. He stressed the many needs in areas of leadership, economic resources, and church construction. The tone was very optimistic and affirmative of his desire to continue as a missionary.⁵⁴¹ Mae Yoho Ward's evaluation of the Riveras' first two years led to a second two-year appointment beginning in 1965, confirming that they would work primarily in leadership development.⁵⁴² The Riveras spent the summer of 1965 in a short furlough at the College of the Bible (Lexington Theological Seminary) and then returned to Venezuela in September of 1965.

The Pentecostal Union of Venezuela responded to the new appointment of the Riveras with the following plan:

December 19, 1963, 1-10.

536 Juan Marcos Rivera, *Venezuela Newsletter* (June, 1963), 4.

537 Gregario Uzcátegui, "*Hitos para la historia*," 2.

538 Juan Marcos Rivera, to Mae Yoho Ward, November 26, 1966.

539 Mae Yoho Ward, to Pastor Freddie Briceno, April 22, 1965; and Juan Marcos Rivera, to Mae Yoho Ward, April 28, 1965.

540 Juan Marcos Rivera, to Mae Yoho Ward, September 13, 1965.

541 Juan Marcos Rivera, to Mae Yoho Ward, December 17, 1964.

542 Mae Yoho Ward, *Highlights*, UCMS, 1965.

A three-point plan for improvement is being inaugurated by a Venezuela union of pentecostal churches, with whom the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) cooperate experimentally.

First, they have expanded the intensive Bible course for leaders from six months to a year, having also sent their first student to the Union Seminary in Puerto Rico. Secondly, they have given high priority to erection of churches and parsonages to provide seven new churches a year. Thirdly, they plan to open an agricultural school as a project of service to the community.⁵⁴³

That same year two additional pastors from Puerto Rico, Wilfredo Vélez and Eunice Santana Vélez, were assigned for a short-term appointment to assist the Riveras in their work.⁵⁴⁴ The Vélez-Santana couple experienced some difficulties during their stay in Venezuela. Juan Marcos Rivera expressed his concern to Dr. Liggett in a pastoral tone, stressing that some of their theological ideas did not fit with more conservative pentecostal churches. He suggested that a more careful analysis of theological issues and differences of opinions between Disciples and pentecostals was needed in order to avoid future misunderstandings.⁵⁴⁵

During the next two years the Riveras continued working on several projects, most importantly the Revolving Fund and the agricultural school in *La Piedad* in *Lara*. Both projects received enthusiastic response from the UCMS, as well as financial support.

The basic purpose of Revolving Fund created by the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela was:

The Pentecostal Evangelical Union of Venezuela hereby creates a Revolving Fund for loans for the purpose of giving greater impulse to the work established by its churches and institutions. With this in mind we shall try to avoid all activities which could impede in any way the capacity of the churches for their self-support.⁵⁴⁶

The Board of Directors of the Revolving Fund approved a procedure and application form and is solely responsible for the final approval of the loans and the administration of all funds.⁵⁴⁷

The policies and guidelines of this Revolving Fund underline the following:

- 1) This Fund will receive contributions from local churches and individuals
- 2) The loans are short-term, soft interest, and available for small local congregations

⁵⁴³ News release, 366, UCMS, 1966.

⁵⁴⁴ Minutes of Board of Trustees, UCMS, June, 1965.

⁵⁴⁵ Juan Marcos Rivera, to Thomas J. Liggett, January 11, 1966. This writer talked to Exeario Sosa about this disagreement in July 1966, and came to the conclusion that this situation was blown out of proportion, in an over reaction from some pastors who lacked the theological sophistication to understand the kind of theological language used by theologically trained pastors like the Vélez-Santana couple. The incident was unfortunate because this couple came with the necessary background and expressed their desire to be servants to the Venezuelan people. See also the Vélez-Santana couple's handwritten letter to Juan Marcos Rivera, March 17, 1965.

⁵⁴⁶ *Administrative Procedure for the Revolving Fund: Pentecostal Evangelical Union of Venezuela*, February 3, 1966. This document was approved and included in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the UCMS, March 15-16, 1966, Exhibit A.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 1-4.

3) Larger congregations may get loans for the construction of church buildings but should have matching funds and financial capacity to repay on a monthly basis

4) The Revolving Fund is based on “a solemn commitment” by local congregations “to maintain its unity in testimony of its faithfulness to Jesus Christ”

5) The Fund will be administered by a Committee on Loans, named by the Board of Directors of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela

The UCMS responded initially with \$5,000 for the Revolving Fund.⁵⁴⁸ By the middle of 1966 the UCMS contribution totaled \$15,000 to this Fund. Juan Marcos Rivera was the main promoter of the Revolving Fund, and he was convinced that this Fund was the best strategy for the United States churches to cooperate with the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela: designing joint efforts and promoting self-support.⁵⁴⁹ He reflected in 1973 on the importance of this unique project of ecumenical cooperation and how it helped the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela to grow in many areas, including loans for the construction of new church buildings, loans for small farming projects, and loans to buy machinery for the manufacture of women’s clothing.⁵⁵⁰ Rivera not only made an assessment of his work and experience during these years but also tried to put into perspective what he envisioned as the “integral” approach of its mission.⁵⁵¹

The other important project was the agricultural school *La Granja* in the Bender Center. The strategy of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela included social work and education; thus orphanages became an integral part of its effort. Julio Hidalgo, a pastor in Barquisimeto and prominent leader in the Pentecostal Union, wrote an article distributed among the congregations stressing the importance of this project and the contextual and integral approach applied.⁵⁵² This project received initial support from UCMS and other departments of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), including the Men’s Department and local congregations. Exeario Sosa and Juan Marcos Rivera envisioned this project as more than a farming school and orphanage. Bender Center was increasingly becoming a center for many programs and activities in the Pentecostal Union, including the intensive biblical course (CBI), an evening high-school program for adults, women’s retreats, pastor’s conferences, and summer camps.⁵⁵³

The agricultural school at Bender Center, referred to as *La Piedad* among the churches, was built over a period of ten years and then continued to be renovated, with many new sections added to the building. It provided a much needed center of activity for the Pentecostal Union in the country.

More than twelve different teams of volunteers from the United States and Puerto Rico

548 Thomas J. Liggett, to Exeario Sosa, February 19, 1966.

549 Juan Marcos Rivera, to T. J. Liggett, March 29, 1966.

550 Juan Marcos Rivera, “The Church Matures in Venezuela,” *World Call* (March 1973), 29-30.

551 Juan Marcos Rivera, to T. J. Liggett, June 8, 1966. On that same day Rivera also wrote in Spanish a lengthy letter-reflection in which he expands on these ideas and what he considers to be relevant issues facing the churches in Latin America during that time.

552 Julio Hidalgo, “*Observaciones sobre: Las bases bíblicas para el funcionamiento del Centro de Educación Comunitaria G. F. Bender,*” mimeographed copy, 1964, 1-4.

553 Juan Marcos Rivera, to T. J. Liggett, November 26, 1966.

came to *La Piedad* to work at the Bender Center during the summers.⁵⁵⁴ They raised funds in their local congregations to help with construction materials, and they were joined by local teams from the Pentecostal Union in the construction effort. These groups participated in worship with local congregations during their visits to Venezuela. The Pentecostal Union designated a local committee to manage and administer the construction project and the strategic plan for the Bender Center, named in honor of G. F. Bender, the first pentecostal missionary to preach in the central region of Venezuela, who inspired the project as recorded in chapters four and six of this dissertation.

The Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico continued to maintain an active relationship with the Pentecostal Union in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A delegation of Disciples from Puerto Rico visited the Pentecostal Union in July 1966, including four prominent leaders and the *Orfeón Evangélico* (male choir) from *Comerio* Christian Church in Bayamón. The preachers Rev. Florentino Santana, Rev. Helém Melecio, Rev. Lucas Torres, and Rev. Luis Del Pilar, along with the singers, made a tremendous impact among the local congregations of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela and in the auditoriums and plazas where they offered public concerts. In 1967 the Santa Juanita Christian Church Choir visited the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela and other denominations, including the Presbyterians. The Lutheran Choir of Bayamón, one of the most famous choirs in Puerto Rico, performed under the director of Dr. Angel Mattos in churches, theaters, and plazas during the summer of 1968. The choir of the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico visited Venezuela in 1969 and offered concerts in pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, and independent evangelical churches. All these experiences deepened the relationship between Venezuela and the churches in Puerto Rico, primarily with the Disciples of Christ.⁵⁵⁵

By early 1967 it was time again to decide on renewing the appointment of the Riveras to Venezuela. Dr. Liggett, at this time Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the UCMS, made it clear that “we ought to look forward to a continued relationship to the churches in Venezuela. I am also inclined to believe that you and Dona Flor are the persons to carry this relationship because of the very fine work that you have done during this period.”⁵⁵⁶ Rivera responded in the affirmative, initiating the process for renewing the appointment.⁵⁵⁷ The Board of Trustees of the Division of World Mission of the UCMS instructed Dr. Liggett to begin a review of the “advisability of continuing relationships with the Church in Venezuela.”⁵⁵⁸ In March of 1967 the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela praised the work of Juan Marcos and Flor Rivera during these years and enthusiastically requested that they be reappointed to Venezuela.⁵⁵⁹

Juan Marcos Rivera’s thesis *Faith Churches of Venezuela: An Historical Survey* focused on the Protestant missionary movement in Venezuela, particularly the so called “faith

554 Juan Marcos Rivera, “Missionary Notes,” *World Call* (July-August 1972), 25-27.

555 Flor P. Rivera, “Venezuelan Christians ‘Entertaining Angels Unawares,’” *World Call* (October 1970), 24-25, 31.

556 Thomas J. Liggett, to Juan Marcos Rivera, January 1, 1967.

557 Thomas J. Liggett, to Juan Marcos Rivera, January 25, 1967.

558 Minutes of Board, DWM-UCMS, January 26, 1967.

559 Minutes of Board, DWM-UCMS, March 14-15, 1967.

missions.”⁵⁶⁰ He traced missionary work from the beginning of that movement in Venezuela and found three main emphases: massive evangelism, personal evangelism, and divine healing. He criticized the sectarian attitude of these missions, claiming that their fundamentalist theology was an obstacle to ecumenical dialogue, creating an environment of mistrust and intrigue.⁵⁶¹

Rivera saw great potential for the work of Disciples among pentecostals, as well as a challenge for the historic churches. He displayed an avid enthusiasm after four years of intensive work with the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. He observed that the pentecostal churches had achieved a significant and effective growth in evangelism and felt that the Disciples of Christ should share in this unfinished task.⁵⁶² According to Rivera, missionaries should educate and prepare leaders for these indigenous churches as fraternal workers rather than paternalistic missionaries.⁵⁶³ In order to achieve these goals, the UCMS should respond with both financial and human resources in an atmosphere of cooperation and unity. The Pentecostal Union of Venezuela was open to new ventures in mission, but it lacked so many resources that it needed the fraternal support of the Disciples of Christ.⁵⁶⁴ His conclusion was that leadership formation would be the key to promoting an integral evangelism with an ethics of social involvement. He insisted that with good stewardship and a minimally decent infrastructure, the goals could be reached. He believed that the Holy Spirit would be the reliable source and the secret ingredient in the work.⁵⁶⁵

In May of 1967, the Riveras wrote a letter to Thomas J. Liggett evaluating the situation in Venezuela. The letter affirmed the need to continue supporting the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, pointing out much that remained to be done but affirming its many important achievements like the Revolving Fund, the agricultural school at Bender Center, and the Intensive Bible Course, among others.⁵⁶⁶ In what was a clear desire to return to Venezuela as missionaries, the Riveras made the following statement:

The Riveras are completing the second term of two years of experimental association with the churches of the Union [The Pentecostal Union of Venezuela]. They have been invited to return for another term of four years. Also it has been decided that if a replacement can be secured for the time that they will be out this be sent as soon as convenient.⁵⁶⁷

The concluding remarks summarize their assessment of this effort in ecumenical partnership:

The work of the Christian Churches in Venezuela is well established. It is a work of *cooperation* with the established churches of the *Unión Evangélica Pentecostal Venezolana*. Both groups relate to each other in *mutual fellowship* (emphasis mine).⁵⁶⁸

560 Juan Marcos Rivera, *Faith Churches of Venezuela: An Historical Survey* (thesis for the Master of Divinity: Lexington Theological Seminary, 1968), 6-13.

561 Ibid., 31-47.

562 Ibid., 68.

563 Ibid., 76.

564 Ibid., 79-80.

565 Ibid., 80-85.

566 Juan Marcos Rivera, to T. J. Liggett, May 23, 1967.

567 Ibid.

568 Ibid.

A *Memorandum* drafted by Thomas J. Liggett on October 20, 1967, following a meeting with the Riveras in Saint Louis offered projections of the work for the next four years. The couple made an appeal for more financial support for programs, as well as more support in the areas of transportation for missionaries, scholarships, and a dialogue in Indianapolis with Pentecostal Union leaders regarding future relationships.⁵⁶⁹

The Riveras, along with their three daughters, returned to the United States for one year in order to complete graduate studies. He completed a Master of Divinity degree at Lexington Theological Seminary (formerly College of the Bible) in 1968, and she finished a Masters degree in Library Science from the University of Kentucky that summer. They returned to Venezuela late in the summer of 1968.

Several times during their term as missionaries Juan Marcos Rivera complained about the lack of funds and the “bureaucracy” he perceived in the headquarters of the UCMS in Indianapolis. He stated his emotional state of mind and spirit in a letter to Liggett in 1968:

T. J., you will have to forgive me in name of our friendship, but you know I have been living with these people, eating their food and being one of them; then coming to this country and trying to do the same with our people here. They want to help but we say no to their offer because of the policies established for the regulation of our work. Then we present our needs and the answer is ‘no funds available.’ It is too depressive and I refuse to understand it. I can understand that we do not have the money on hand but not that our people are not to find it and give it with love. Let me do the promotion, and I will raise it. If people with empty stomachs give to see this school [the Bender School] go on with its work, I am sure that people with reducing diets will gladly share in love and concern when they know the facts. Please forgive me.⁵⁷⁰

William J. Nottingham was appointed Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Division of Overseas Ministries as a part of the restructure of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. Nottingham made some initial observations about the desire for future work and continuing support of the Pentecostal Union and the Rivera’s ministry.⁵⁷¹ Rivera sent a letter to Nottingham summarizing what had been done, the projects under way, and some of the plans envisioned for the future. His analysis showed the larger picture of the situation in Venezuela and some of the issues currently confronting the Pentecostal Union.⁵⁷² Thomas J. Liggett, now President of the UCMS, wrote a letter to Rivera rejoicing in the fact that the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela was participating in ecumenical events with other pentecostal churches and in larger ecumenical gatherings with

⁵⁶⁹ Thomas J. Liggett, “Memorandum,” Notes on the meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Juan Marcos Rivera during the St. Louis Convention, October 20, 1967.

⁵⁷⁰ Juan Marcos Rivera, to T. J. Liggett, Lexington, KY, March 23, 1968. Rivera challenged an existing policy that did not allow Disciples missionaries to raise funds directly in the Disciples congregations in the United States for their own projects. For a narrative that tells how deeply committed Rivera was to the people of Venezuela, see Juan Marcos Rivera, *Cartas a Jesús (Letters to Jesus)*, Lima, Peru: CLAI, 1982. He was more than a traditional missionary, becoming more identified with Venezuelan people to the end of his life.

⁵⁷¹ William J. Nottingham, to Juan Marcos Rivera, November 20, 1968.

⁵⁷² Juan Marcos Rivera, to William J. Nottingham, December 3, 1968.

Mainline Protestant denominations in Latin America.⁵⁷³

In another letter in 1969 Rivera once more emphasized the importance of this ecumenical relationship with the Pentecostal Union:

Started on an experimental basis, this cooperative venture with Pentecostal brethren in Venezuela is steadily becoming one of the most promising experiments in modern missionary work. Its success might enlighten the path for similar projects in this huge continent where groups like the UEPV exist country after country.⁵⁷⁴

Rivera also dedicated his time to strengthening the Bender Center, *La Granja*, not only as an agricultural school but also as an education center for the whole Pentecostal Union. He insisted that the missionaries appointed in the future should have enough experience to assist in leadership development as a priority.⁵⁷⁵ In reports to the UCMS Board of Trustees, William Nottingham constantly made reference to the importance of the Bender Center and the services it provided to the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela.⁵⁷⁶

During this last term as missionary in Venezuela, Juan Marcos Rivera was asked to be part-time regional secretary for Colombia and Venezuela for CELADEC (Latin American Commission for Christian Education), an ecumenical project of Protestant churches in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁵⁷⁷ This organization designed and produced Christian education materials for the churches and a curriculum for Sunday schools.

One year after the conclusion of his last term as missionary in Venezuela, Rivera made a more realistic evaluation but also reaffirmed his conviction about the importance of this “experiment in sharing personnel.” He stressed some specific areas that needed more attention: exchanges with churches in Puerto Rico and the United States, work camps to build new infrastructure, continued sharing of “ecumenical personnel,” youth programs, and a center for education and “concientization.”⁵⁷⁸ Rivera moved from Venezuela to Puerto Rico to become the Associate General Secretary of UNELAM (The Provisional Commission on Christian Unity in Latin America). There Rivera was able to work successfully toward the 1978 Assembly of Latin American Churches in Oaxtepec, Mexico, that established the Latin American Council of Churches.

In 1972 when the Riveras ended their last appointment in Venezuela, there was no doubt that they had helped to accomplish much more than was expected in a few years. They developed an integral missionary strategy based on solid theological and biblical reflection, a commitment to social action and transformation, and a vision that took seriously the pentecostal ethos and experience with an ecumenical vocation and commitment. In their effort to provide

573 Thomas J. Liggett, to Juan Marcos Rivera, February 15, 1968.

574 Juan Marcos Rivera, to William J. Nottingham, June 30, 1969.

575 Juan Marcos Rivera, *Faith Churches of Venezuela*, 79.

576 William J. Nottingham, “Latin America and Caribbean Reports,” Minutes, UCMS, February 22-23, 1972, 31; and William J. Nottingham, “Latin America and Caribbean Reports,” Minutes, UCMS, June 27-28, 1972, 37.

577 Juan Marcos Rivera, “Report on the Work in Venezuela, 1970.” See Minutes of Board of Trustees, UCMS, June 1971, for the official appointment.

578 Juan Marcos Rivera, “An Experiment in Sharing Personnel: From Historical Church to Pentecostal Mission,” *International Review of Mission*, (October 1973), 446-456.

good education, effective evangelism, and concrete solidarity, they shaped the future agenda of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela.

At times Rivera tended to be as paternalistic as traditional missionaries, an attitude in them that he criticized both publicly and in written form.⁵⁷⁹ Over the years he became bitter about the attitudes that he wanted to change within the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, but he failed to follow the correct approach, contradicting his desire to maintain dialogue and tolerance.⁵⁸⁰

Juan Marcos Rivera sided with a group of more conservative pastors in 1982-1984 and tried to establish a new Pentecostal Confraternity of Churches. Some of these congregations permanently left the UEPV, while others left temporarily then returned to the UEPV (see chapter six). Rivera was invited to be the preacher for the August, 1984, Annual Convention XVIII of the UEPV in Las Marías de Turén, Portuguesa. During his first sermon, "A Strange Fire in the Altar," he proceeded to challenge the pastors and delegates, making direct accusations toward specific people with a defiant attitude. One of his main concerns was the "radical political commitment"⁵⁸¹ of the young leadership of the UEPV, namely the new Presiding Bishop Gamaliel Lugo, elected in 1983.

During the UEPV Annual Convention XXVIII in Las Marías 1984, the Administrative Board of the UEPV met in executive session with Juan Marcos Rivera to clarify some of the issues and concerns he raised. Rivera left the next day, never to return to another Convention or meeting of the UEPV. He later expressed his regret at "his arrogance, bitterness and defiant attitude. I did not follow the correct attitude and approach with brothers and sisters I love so much."⁵⁸²

The Pentecostal Union joined other churches in honoring him and his wife Flor at the General Assembly of the Latin American Council of Churches in Indaiatuba, Brazil, 1988.

Consolidation of an Ecumenical Partnership, 1972-1980

The UCMS wanted to continue and consolidate its ecumenical partnership with the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, so it decided to provide missionaries who would work in specific projects. The first couple appointed was very experienced with fifteen years of intensive ecumenical work in Paraguay and Argentina (1954-1969). Dean Earl Rogers and his wife Grace were appointed for two years (1969-1971)⁵⁸³ to work with indigenous congregations in the

⁵⁷⁹ Juan Marcos Rivera, *Faith Churches of Venezuela*, 74-77. See Juan Marcos Rivera, *Cartas a Jesús*, 142-143.

⁵⁸⁰ Juan Marcos Rivera and Flor Rivera, Personal conversations with Carmelo E. Álvarez at the Annual Convention of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico, February 1998. The writer of this dissertation worked with Rivera as a Disciples missionary in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than fifteen years, and substituted for Juan Marcos Rivera as Regional Secretary for the Caribbean and Secretary for the Pastoral Ministry of Consolation and Solidarity of the Latin American Council of Churches upon Rivera's retirement in December of 1983.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Biographical information: Dean Earl Rogers, UCMS Archives, 1980.

Guajira region, between Colombia and Venezuela, which was largely composed of Wayllu (Guajiros) Indians. Theological education at Butler University (B.A.) and Christian Theological Seminary (B.D. and M.S.T.) in Indianapolis enabled Rogers to teach courses on biblical, historical, and social ethics at the Intensive Bible Course (CBI) in Bender Center. The Rogers couple provided interim support as the Riveras concluded their term as missionaries, which was a transitional moment both for the Pentecostal Union and the UCMS. The Rogers couple expressed their commitment and enthusiasm particularly as they saw Presbyterians and pentecostals collaborating on ecumenical efforts.⁵⁸⁴

When the Riveras left Venezuela in 1972, the UCMS selected a couple with extensive experience as missionaries. Ralph and Annamae Adams had initiated their career in 1945 in Paraguay and worked there for nineteen years (until 1964). Ralph had a solid theological education with degrees from Johnson Bible College and Butler University, as well as graduate work at Cornell and Phillips Universities. Annamae Adams was a licensed practical nurse with a certificate of proficiency in obstetrics and pediatrics.⁵⁸⁵

The UCMS Board of Trustees, upon the recommendation of the Latin America and Caribbean Department of the UCMS, made a four-year appointment for this couple “to work with the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela replacing Mr. and Mrs. Juan Marcos Rivera in training of pastors, community development, youth and family counseling.”⁵⁸⁶ In 1973 Ralph Adams was named Coordinator of the Education Center for Rural and Agricultural in cooperation with the World Council of Churches.⁵⁸⁷ In a short note included in *The Disciple*,⁵⁸⁸ the journal related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a reference is made to the unique relationship established by the Disciples of Christ and the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. The Adams couple was praised for its leadership in agriculture and community development. The note concluded with this statement: “Partnership means renewal and growth in Venezuela.”⁵⁸⁹

In 1977 Puerto Rican pastor Rev. José Erazo was appointed by the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States to a three-year term as a fraternal worker with the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. His job description gave him an advisory role in administration and preaching. He also collaborated as a teacher in intensive biblical course (CBI) held at the Bender Center. Dr. Samuel Soliván, a Puerto Rican missionary from the Reformed Church in America (1976-1980), was deployed for four years as a full-time teacher with the intensive biblical course under an agreement with that denomination.⁵⁹⁰ Soliván’s solid pentecostal foundation, combined with his involvement with the Reformed Church, contributed greatly to his ecumenical leadership and teaching.

584 Grace and Dean Rogers, “Missionary Notes,” *World Call*, (January 1970), 33-34.

585 Biographical Information: Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Q. Adams, UCMS Archives, March 1977.

586 Minutes of Board of Trustees, UCMS, February 22-23, 1972, 31.

587 Biographical Information: Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Q. Adams, UCMS Archives, March 1977. See also Minutes of Board of Trustees, UCMS, November 16-17, 1971, on the financial support given by the World Council of Churches to the Bender Center.

588 Flor Rivera, “Venezuela, Partnership for Growth,” *The Disciple*, April 6, 1975, 14.

589 Ibid.

590 José Erazo, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, June 16, 1997.

Rev. Erazo worked closely with Exeario Sosa, Presiding Bishop of the UEPV, and actively preached in Baptist and Presbyterian churches. Exeario Sosa passed away in June of 1981 while in the process of negotiating a possible second term for Erazo as fraternal worker before retiring in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, that negotiation never took place.⁵⁹¹

From an Experiment in Cooperation to an Ecumenical Partnership

What started in 1963 as “an experiment in cooperation” moved into a permanent ecumenical partnership. The partnership was consolidated by the process of sharing ecumenical resources that included missionary personnel, grants for specific programs and projects, a constant solidarity from the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico, visits to local congregations by delegations from Disciples congregations in the United States, work camps to construct buildings, evangelistic efforts with local congregations and at the national level, educational programs, youth programs, and community and development programs. That ecumenical sharing was established over a period of time that tested both the mutual trust and integrity of mission. Both denominations demonstrated a reflective attitude and wise decision-making in the face of misunderstandings and conflicts.

One area of partnership that consistently received special attention was education. A multi-faceted approach helped the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela to provide better education for its pastors, training for the laity and basic Christian education for congregations. The role of Disciples missionaries in this area was outstanding. By strengthening and consolidating the agricultural school, *la Escuela-Granja*, the Pentecostal Union was able to attempt to offer these the Bender Center as an education and ministry facility for the whole denomination. To this day it is used for biannual National Conventions of the UEPV, regional meetings of different church organizations, and educational workshops. The local congregation *Jesucristo Liberador* (Jesus Christ Liberator) continues to meet there regularly.

The intensive biblical course (CBI) was a fundamental tool in educating pastors and equipping them with the theological skills for their ministry. The results are more than evident when one examines the theological pilgrimage of the UEPV, as reflected and traced in the sixth chapter of this dissertation.

The Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV) was able to integrate the evangelistic fervor very predominant in its life and ministry with social action and development. The active presence of theologians and preachers from Puerto Rico and the presence of theologically-trained missionaries were also important factors in maintaining the healthy balance of evangelism and social action so crucial for pentecostal churches.

The issue of integrating social concerns with evangelism led to another important dimension of pentecostal faith. These churches were able to develop a paradigm that was theologically consistent while incorporating missional commitment, ecumenical vocation, and testimonial integrity.⁵⁹²

591 José Erazo, interview by Carmelo E. Álvarez, June 16, 1997.

592 For a closer analysis and interpretation on this integration from social ethics and Pentecostal perspectives, see Carmelo E. Álvarez, *Santidad y compromiso* (Mexico City: CUPSA, 1985); and Eldin Villafane, *El Espíritu Liberador* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmanns, 1991).

In August 1983 Gamaliel Lugo was elected Presiding Bishop of the Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. That summer David Vargas, a Puerto Rican Disciples pastor, became Executive Secretary for the Latin America and Caribbean Department of the DOM. Over the years the relationship between Lugo and Vargas has proven to be very conducive to an even more consistent and strong ecumenical partnership between the two churches.

On April 11-12, 1996, David Vargas convened a planning group to explore the feasibility of hosting a consultation of pentecostal denominations that are ecumenical partners with the Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ (UCC) in Latin America and the Caribbean. The planning group consisted of: Gamaliel Lugo, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela; Ulises Muñoz, Bishop of Pentecostal Church of Chile; Carmelo E. Álvarez, Affiliate Professor of Church History and Theology at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis; William Nottingham, prior President of DOM; Lucas Torres, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries; Raquel Rodríguez, Program Associate for Latin America and Caribbean of DOM; and David Vargas, Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of DOM.

The main purpose of this planning group was to explore a possible agenda for the consultation. The issues raised at its meeting were: past and present relationships, future projections, analysis of the presence of Hispanic pentecostals in the United States, pentecostal churches in a global context, dialog on the concept of partnership, and challenges that lie ahead.⁵⁹³ The consultation was held in Indianapolis, October 30-November 1, 1997, under the title: "Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit." All five denominations in ecumenical partnership with the Disciples/UCC were present.

Results of Partnership in Mission

This ecumenical partnership between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the UEPV developed from an initial experiment in cooperation to an ecumenical partnership in sharing ecumenical resources that has remained in effect for four decades (beginning in August 1964) and has motivated other pentecostal denominations, such as the Church of God in Argentina and the Christian Mission Pentecostal Church of Nicaragua, to enter into similar partnerships.

Likewise, another United States denomination, the United Church of Christ, moved into a process of ecumenical partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) especially in mission to Latin America. The United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have participated in a joint venture in mission in Latin America and the Caribbean that began in the 1960s.

Sporadic collaborations were initiated in the 1960s by Dr. William J. Nottingham, Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of DOM (Division of Overseas Ministries), and Oscar C. Nussmann, Associate Executive Secretary named by the United Church Board for World Ministries (UCBWM). In the early 1980s David Vargas became Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean for the DOM, and Patricia Rumer served as Executive Secretary in the same region for the UCBWM. Together they coordinated work in Latin America, co-sponsoring programs, supporting development projects, making

⁵⁹³ "Memorando," David Vargas, *Consulta Pentecostal-Discípulos/UCC, 1 de Agosto, 1996*.

missionary appointments jointly, and consolidating a strategy toward ecumenical partnership. Common Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean became the model for the establishment of the Common Global Ministries (CGBM) between the DOM and the UCBWM in 1996.⁵⁹⁴ This ecumenical partnership between two mainline denominations in the United States brought together the pentecostal denominations already in an ecumenical partnership with each denomination. The UCBWM had nurtured a partnership with the Pentecostal Church of Chile since 1982 and had participated in ecumenical cooperation with the Church of God in Argentina since the late 1980s. The DOM already had an ecumenical partnership with the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela since 1964 and the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba since 1976. In the late 1980s the Church of the Brethren and the DOM established an ecumenical partnership with the Christian Pentecostal Mission of Nicaragua. Other initiatives have been taken by the *CGMB* (Common Global Ministries Board) with other pentecostal denominations in Latin America and the Caribbean as well.⁵⁹⁵

During its long history, the ecumenical partnership between the Disciples and the UEPV has exhibited both weaknesses and strengths. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States has as one of its foundational streams the restoration movement of the Cane Ridge, Kentucky, Revival of 1801. This revival was very influential in the expansion and consolidation of Protestant denominations in the Midwest of the United States. It is clear that what happened at Cane Ridge included pentecostal experiences such as glossolalia and dancing in the Spirit. David Bundy, United Methodist Church historian, stressed the fact that this revival, deeply rooted in American Christianity, gave the Disciples of Christ an impulse in evangelism, liturgy, social action, and public witness.⁵⁹⁶ On the other hand, some Disciples scholars will argue that this “charismatic stream” was not predominant and influential among the Disciples of Christ, stressing that the “ecumenical stream” finally determined the evolution of the denomination toward the twentieth century.⁵⁹⁷ This disagreement shows that the Disciples are of two minds about pentecostal elements of life and faith.

As a result of this internal debate, a paradox soon became apparent. The Disciples of Christ, through the work of DOM and now the CGBM, are in close relationship with pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, yet Disciples are unable to relate to pentecostal churches in the United States or to charismatic Hispanic congregations within their own

594 David A. Vargas, “Profile of Our Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean,” paper presented at A Disciples/UCC Consultation with Pentecostal Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit,” Indianapolis, October 30-November 1, 1997, 1.

595 Ibid., 2.

596 David Bundy, “*Ecumenismo en el Espíritu retos para los pentecostales y las iglesias más antiguas*,” Keynote Address, A Disciples/UCC Consultation with Pentecostal Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit,” Indianapolis, October 30-November 1, 1997, 1-6.

597 Paul Crow, “A Response” to Carmelo E. Álvarez, “Our Ecumenical Vocation and Commitment as a Sign of Hope,” A Disciples/UCC Consultation with Pentecostal Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit,” Indianapolis, October 30-November 1, 1997.

denomination. This contradiction became more complicated as the denomination realized that the fastest growing congregations among the Disciples of Christ were African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic-Latino. Recent trends show an increasing number of United States local and regional delegations visiting Venezuela independently, without making use of the historical DOM or CGBM resources. For example, the Rocky Mountain Region/Conference established an independent commission for global affairs to facilitate a partnership with the UEPV and its leaders. The Massachusetts Conference of the UCC has established an annual pastor exchange program with the Pentecostal Church of Chile.

A second weakness was the tendency toward a “paternalistic attitude” exhibited by the missionaries working in Venezuela on behalf of the DOM. The correctives for this attitude are increasing mutual respect, joint decision making, and direct responses to the concrete needs presented by the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela. The leaders in Venezuela, including the Presiding Bishop of the Pentecostal Union, were able to have a voice and exercise more authority within the ecumenical movement in Latin America and the Caribbean because of receiving solid theological education at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica and gaining ecumenical experience and exposure by participating in the growing numbers of conferences and other gatherings.⁵⁹⁸ The Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela committed to a public ecumenical vocation and intentional education of leadership in the country that is recognized even by more conservative pentecostal denominations.

The consultation “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit” in Indianapolis in 1997 offered a unique opportunity to examine, evaluate, reaffirm, and enhance this ecumenical partnership. David Vargas, Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the CGBM, offered an important clue to this process of examination and evaluation with a question in his keynote speech: “Why a Consultation?” In response to this question, Vargas emphasized the need to explore new ways of walking together in unity and of celebrating a common pilgrimage of four decades between two mainline denominations in the United States and Canada and five pentecostal denominations in Latin America and the Caribbean. The most important discovery of the shared pilgrimage is a common project in mission as a response to the Gospel message.⁵⁹⁹ Vargas stressed that this relationship was based not on mere coincidence but on the concrete reality that throughout these four decades and today “we encounter each other in the same crossroads in the dangerous way between Jericho and Jerusalem.” These churches in the north and the south have responded to the same tragedies and have been confronted by the same challenges.⁶⁰⁰ The first pentecostal church that was met by a United States denomination, the CC(DoC) at the crossroads was the Latin America was the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of

598 Gamaliel Lugo, the Presiding-Bishop of the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela, was also Vice-President of the Latin American Council of Churches. He is an active participant in the Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue with CELAM, CEPLA, and CLAI and is the General Coordinator of CEPLA (Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission).

599 David Vargas, “*¿Por qué una consulta?*” (paper presented at A Disciples/UCC Consultation with Pentecostal Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit,” Indianapolis, October 3-November 1, 1997), 1-2.

600 Ibid.

Venezuela.⁶⁰¹ Soon thereafter, pentecostal churches in Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, and Argentina also joined the journey.

The Indianapolis consultation, according to David Vargas, challenged the churches to deepen the dialogue, unity, and solidarity. It encouraged the partners to engage in a critical and constructive reflection on the history and experience of these relationships, including the learning experiences, obstacles, and common challenges of an “integral mission” in an ecumenical context. The socio-economic, political, religious, and ecological dimensions remained pressing issues in a theologically consistent mission. An effort should be made to continue developing programs and projects that would respond to a “culture of hopelessness” among the people and the churches in both the north and the south.⁶⁰²

After serious discussions in plenary sessions and small groups over a period of three days, the Indianapolis consultation came to a final agreement expressed in a public declaration shared with other partners all over the world in both the English and Spanish languages. The declaration was composed of four parts: living in the Spirit, crossing frontiers, tearing down barriers, and forging hope. The first part affirmed that “the experience shared and lived out these three days has confirmed that we have been convened by the Spirit of God in our joint pilgrimage of many years.”⁶⁰³ The atmosphere of dialogue, celebration, and analysis of the different contexts in which the churches live enabled the reaffirmation of a common vocation to enhance and nurture the existing bonds of fellowship, partnership, and witness.

The second part of the document presented an important statement:

We both live in societies surrounded by powers that act against us, hindering the full and free life that the Spirit offers us. We have crossed frontiers in order to meet and accept our diversities, understand our differences as an enriching opportunity to enrich each other, and assume the current challenges in our international, regional and national contexts.⁶⁰⁴

The third section of the document claimed that the churches in the north and the south live in a “new world order” of globalization; they face ethical challenges such as inequality and disparities in economic justice. These challenges present the churches with an urgent call to prophetic witness in the midst of the destruction of life and the neglect of peace and justice as promised by God’s kingdom.⁶⁰⁵ In searching for a just world order, these churches reaffirm their “shared ecumenical experience” as a call to unity based on an ongoing dialogue. “[F]or the Latin American and Caribbean churches that unity means to follow the pilgrimage toward discernment, grace, forgiveness and reconciliation.”⁶⁰⁶ This search for unity also means that the mainline denominations in the north must help in overcoming prejudice against pentecostal churches “within the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches and some pentecostal

601 Ibid.

602 Ibid., 3-4.

603 Common Board of UCC/CC(DoC), ed. “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit” Declaration, A Disciples/UCC Consultation with Pentecostal Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, Indianapolis, October 30-November 1, 1997, 1.

604 Ibid.

605 Ibid., 2.

606 Ibid.

churches.”⁶⁰⁷ The historic churches in the north must help to explore “a close relationship with pentecostal congregations in the United States, especially African-Americans, Hispanics and Asians.”⁶⁰⁸ This third section of the document closed by asserting the need “to affirm the values of the Gospel, which overcome uniformity, affirm diversity, accept differences, and require faithfulness to the Gospel over any ideologies and oppressive systems.”⁶⁰⁹

In what is evidently the most daring and clear statement of this document, the authors expressed:

We should deepen our experience of *ecumenical sharing*, by tearing down any barrier of exclusion through mutual respect, reciprocity in our worthy treatment and transparency in every action that may nurture our integral growth (emphasis mine).⁶¹⁰

The fourth section on forging hope ended with the following positive statement:

We need to forge, in our ecumenical pilgrimage, a vision of the future that may allow us to move ahead and overcome barriers without discouragement at times when obstacles seem to be greater than our abilities. In order to do so, we need to continue to trust the actions of the Spirit, reaffirming our pledge of service to our churches in the North and South.⁶¹¹

What lies ahead is a most important challenge. David Bundy, in his keynote address at the Indianapolis consultation “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit,” suggested several elements helpful in discerning the signs of a true ecumenical partnership for the future among these churches. First, the churches need to be willing to give and receive with integrity. Second, the mainline denominations in the United States have established partnerships with pentecostal churches in other parts of the world but also need to cross the street to talk to their sister churches in their own neighborhoods. The element of defining who “the other” is becomes crucial. Third, the churches in the north and south must “cooperate and share;” each needs to respond responsibly to the other’s need. Giving and receiving, in action and prayer, will witness to all the parties involved in fellowship for the growth of God’s reign.⁶¹²

The now famous hymn composed by Rev. Exeario Sosa, pastor of Jesus the Liberator Church in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, summarizes this whole process of ecumenical sharing with these words of the refrain:

And we will go through the world with a living faith and hope alive,
Celebrating and singing and smiling and struggling for life.

Conclusions

The experiment in cooperation between Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela is today a solid ecumenical partnership. It has strengthened and deepened in an ongoing relationship that continues to share

607 Ibid.

608 Ibid., 3.

609 Ibid.

610 Ibid.

611 Ibid.

612 David Bundy, “*Ecumenismo en el Espíritu retos para los pentecostales y las iglesias más Antiguas*,” 9-10.

ecumenical resources such as missionary personnel, visits of delegations from Disciples and United Church of Christ congregations, medical teams, and youth groups. More recently the two denominations have been working together on two specific programs: Betty's House (a shelter for pregnant women from the countryside) and the Women's House (a multi-faceted project for church and community women).

The initial contacts from 1959 until 1972 provided opportunities for exploration of areas of collaboration in Christian education, theological education for pastors, a revolving fund for loans, and socio-economic projects aiming at self-support and self-determination. These initial contacts between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela were very helpful and encouraging. This first phase of the relationship resulted in a well established cooperation and mutual fellowship while maintaining the integrity and identity of each denomination. These two very different denominations demonstrated in working together a consistent and solid ecumenical commitment and vocation.

The second phase of this ecumenical partnership (1972-1980) consolidated the pioneer work of the first missionaries and made evident the need to continue working in areas of service and cooperation. The accumulated experience of these years led to a recognition of the importance of a learning-sharing model in the ecumenical sharing of resources. The integrity of mission was tested in a mutual trust and a mature attitude in sharing successes and also confronting conflicts and misunderstanding and learning from them. The ecumenical partnership has been affirmed in a process of integrating social concern, evangelism, theological reflection, and a common witness of faithfulness in concrete service and action.

The UEPV has helped the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States in many ways. The UEPV has helped the Disciples to discern ways to relate to non-Mainline churches in Africa and Asia. In the General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the visible presence, preaching, dancing, and singing in worship have enhanced the vision and experience of Disciples of Christ congregations in all regions in the United States and Canada. These types of involvement and cooperation have confirmed that the initial openness reflected in 1959 by the DOM executives and the Board of Trustees was the right path to take in relating to Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. That path has led to official partnerships with other Pentecostal churches in an ongoing and consistent commitment. It has also helped and influenced the United Church of Christ in its initial contacts and partnership with Pentecostal churches, particularly with the Pentecostal Church of Chile.

Direct contact of United States Disciples of Christ congregations with delegations visiting and working; establishing global partner committees in solidarity with Pentecostal churches in Nicaragua, Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela reflect that global mission work from local congregations expands and benefits the total mission of the church. The Rocky Mountain Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Conference of the United Church of Christ in that same area have established a common global partner committee with the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela that through a series of exchanges has affected the worshipping experience of local congregations in the United States.

Sharing in worshipping experiences and the intercultural exchange of local congregations with Pentecostal churches like the UEPV is raising the consciousness and willingness of many local congregations Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada. It is also encouraging the United States churches to open their communities to Hispanic Disciples of Christ

congregations with a strong charismatic/Pentecostal background from their countries of origin.

The most crucial and lasting influence of this ecumenical partnership is that the UEPV, by maintaining a balanced and integrated ecumenical/evangelical/Pentecostal model of mission, provides a good point of reference in the challenges that Mainline denominations need to address in an ecumenical agenda towards the 21st century with the many changes taking place in a more pluralistic world.

CHAPTER VIII

FORWARD IN MISSION: AN ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

The writer of this dissertation has claimed that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela have shared for four decades in a process that started as an experiment in cooperation and became a successful ecumenical partnership based on equality, mutuality, and respect. This dissertation has paid particular attention to analyzing and evaluating the partnership during first two decades (1960-1980). An effort was made to include official documents, letters, and interviews of persons involved in the partnership itself. Relevant materials were examined, selected, and interpreted in order to illuminate the history of the partnering process.

In the Chapter I the author set forth the dissertation's theoretical framework, defined the thesis as a forty-year success of the ecumenical partnership between the Disciples and the UEPV, and introduced the concepts of *missio Dei* and *koinonia*. It showed the importance of the search for identity and mission both as a defining factor for denominational identity and as the foundation of relationships between groups. Chapter I described two models of mission strategy (Mainline Protestant and Pentecostal), analyzed the joint mission strategy of the partnership, and highlighted the ESR model of partnership. Chapter I also outlined the methodology, principles, and delimitations for this study, which included performing an examination of context and a historical criticism of root causes behind the character of the churches through participation/observation, interviews, and letters, and documents. Eight key questions were raised early in the introduction and were addressed as the chapters unfolded.

The theological elements of mission are provided in the Chapter II through an examination of different traditions and diverse theological positions while searching for consensus on the key concept of *missio Dei* as God's missionary action and emphasizing the holistic, integral, and inclusive dimensions of mission. The conciliar process was shown to follow the same path of affirming mission as *missio Dei*. Another predominant motive in ecumenical circles has been *koinonia* as communion in Christian fellowship, worship, and witness in service. This chapter showed that since the Church is called to a commitment to solidarity and unity while caring for God's creation, *koinonia* as partnership is seen as ecumenical cooperation in concrete sharing of resources. A feminist theologian was quoted to claim that real partnership requires the construction of better relationships for the future of all humanity. The UCCP and the Sao Paulo Process were cited as offering a common witness in moving away from the colonial heritage into self-determination, self-support, and dignity.

The main purpose of Chapter III was to stress that the Mainline Protestant missions in Venezuela faced the crucial issue of determining their identities by affirming their heritage while looking toward a promising future. These churches confronted many obstacles in this process, including their own internal divisions as well as the historical conflict within Latin America and the Caribbean. Churches and ecumenical organizations struggled to live in mission and unity as a visible sharing in God's mission and the coming of God's reign. Regional and national conferences, consultations, and continental assemblies promoted a conciliar process that was expressed concretely in the founding of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) in 1978. Here ecumenical vocation and missional commitment were intertwined. The liberal

missionary model was able to move from the influence of an expansive “liberal project” promoted by the United States to a holistic, viable, and relevant Protestantism within the historical conditions of Latin America and the Caribbean where the church in a new diaspora was a predominant theological motive.

Chapter IV delineated the mission strategy of Pentecostal churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, defining their identity and mission as an ecumenism of the Spirit. Pentecostal church leaders were active participants in promoting this style of ecumenism and in establishing partnerships with mainline denominations. Mission and unity was envisioned as a gift of the Spirit that resulted in the promotion of justice, hope, and peace. CEPLA was established as a venue for dialogue and an instrument to enhance partnerships and encourage strategies for social action and evangelism. As inheritors of ecumenism of the Spirit blowing in the Azusa Street movement and other revivals and spiritual movements in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean received inspiration and a missionary impulse in what was already a diverse and complex Pentecostal movement. The three predominant mission models listed were the missionary expansive model connected primarily to United States based boards of missions, a divine healing neopentecostalism, and the indigenous autonomous movement. All three mission models responded to the pressing needs of the poor and oppressed that have comprised the majority of members in the Pentecostal churches of Latin America and the Caribbean to this day.

The Chapter V traced the shaping of a strategy for mission within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States. This denomination grew out of the restoration movement but opted for an ecumenical commitment in the promotion of mission and unity. The Disciples developed a theology of mission as God’s mission and an integral mission strategy in which the central theme of “kingdom building” emerged as an ecclesiology with three distinctive emphases: the members of the church as citizens of the kingdom, the kinship of God’s people as active agents in promoting mission in unity for the kingdom, and the kingdom as communion with God in ecumenical global cooperation for justice and the spread of the Gospel. In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, *missio Dei* was manifest as unity in diversity, with identity and mission in a creative tension between the church and the kingdom of God. Mission as God’s mission implied retaining the freedom to examine and interpret while accepting a consensus on the essential doctrinal tenets.

In Chapter VI the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela was presented as an autonomous and autochthonous movement that opted for an ecumenical vocation and ecumenical relationships. Its strategy for mission integrated spiritual formation, leadership development, and the capacity to confront new challenges and conflicts. According to this strategy the Church is empowered by the Spirit to promote and witness to Christian unity. The UEPV was a pioneering force in reclaiming the Bolivarian ideal of a “Great Motherland.” It emphasized that the power of the Holy Spirit equips the people to respond to the crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean and to heal their own internal crisis as a church, as well as imparting the vision to discern the signs of the times and thus to better serve God’s people. The UEPV was shown to affirm a vision that maintained a balance between its mission as a Pentecostal church and its ecumenical commitment.

Chapter VII traced the relationship between the Disciples of Christ and the UEPV that started as an experiment in cooperation and mutual fellowship and grew to become a solid ecumenical partnership. The two denominations continued to honor differences and diversity by

maintaining the identity and the integrity of each denomination. They reaffirmed an ecumenical commitment and vocation to continue working together in mission. The learning-sharing model in the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources was one of the key elements in this vital and positive ecumenical relationship.

The questions raised in the introduction⁶¹³ can be answered as follows:

1. These two denominations have articulated and reflected theologically on their praxis by developing *missio Dei* and *koinonia* as strategies of mission that direct this praxis toward consistency and coherence while shaping and clarifying their identity and mission.
2. The two undergirding theological motives in their theologies of mission are mission as “kingdom building,” for the Disciples of Christ, and mission as “liberating Spirit,” for the Evangelical Pentecostal Union. Both denominations have been influenced by ongoing theological discussions within the ecumenical movement during the second half of the twentieth century.
3. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States was strongly influenced by the predominant liberal model of the missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that dominated mainline Protestantism in the United States. The UEPV was influenced by the movement that established the first Latin America and the Caribbean Pentecostal churches early in the twentieth century. It then evolved to become an indigenous, autonomous, and autochthonous movement that responded to the poor sectors of these churches. The UEPV also demonstrated an openness to the contextual and liberation theologies very influential in Latin America and the Caribbean.
4. These two denominations share a common understanding of their sharing in God’s mission by opting for strategies of mission that are committed to a liberating faith by the presence and power of the triune God.
5. The DOC and UEPV have developed a learning-sharing process of mutual accountability, a humble attitude to deal with misunderstandings and conflicts, and a determination to stay together and deepen their ecumenical commitment.
6. For forty years these two denominations have moved forward in mission while maintaining their theological identities, constructing a theological and missiological integrity, sharing in solidarity in times of crisis and reaffirming their common ecumenical commitment.
7. Both denominations have made the commitment to continue in their common vision for mission together, remaining open to dialogue, designing and promoting common projects, and planning new initiatives while consolidating existing projects. The denominations continue in the sharing of ecumenical resources such as delegations exchanges, missionary personnel, educational funding, women’s ministries support, social programs for poor women, and evangelistic programs.
8. Each denomination can improve on deepening this ecumenical partnership by exploring new strategies for mission. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States can benefit from the evangelistic fervor and experience of the UEPV. The UEPV can learn from the experience in ministries of compassion, solidarity, and social action gained by the Disciples of Christ during more than 150 of existence. The accumulated experience of these 40 years of

613 See chapter one, 9.

ecumenical partnership forms a solid foundation upon which to continue exploring new adventures in mission.

One element that makes this mutual partnership a successful model is its immersion in concrete experiences and positive results, even during critical times. First, a mutual partnership requires speaking the truth to each other (Ephesians 4:25b) in order to be accountable in trust and respect for each other. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the UEPV have followed this practice in several crucial moments: During the initial contacts from 1959 to 1972, an experiment in cooperation was established, avoiding any false expectations but cultivating a frank and honest dialogue while learning and sharing with one another. The second crucial moment came in the 1972-1980 period when the DOM and the UEPV decided to move forward in consolidating their ecumenical partnership, in sharing missionary personnel for specific projects, in providing funds, and in sharing the expertise of qualified professionals. The third crucial moment came in the years 1981-1983 when the UEPV suffered a serious internal conflict that almost destroyed the organization. During the UEPV XXVII Convention, August 25-28, 1983, the DOM stood with them by sending the Executive Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rev. David Vargas, which resulted in both churches confirming their intent stay together in mission. To further solidify this commitment, Rev. Gamaliel Lugo was invited as an international guest at the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Des Moines, October 1985. The fourth crucial moment came during the consultation “Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit” in Indianapolis in 1997. This consultation provided a setting and opportunity for the UEPV and the other Pentecostal churches now in partnership to “speak the truth in love” once more. Participants confirmed that many weaknesses, obstacles, and dilemmas needed to be addressed by both sides (see Chapter VII, pp.203-207), but despite these challenges the participants were committed to staying together in mission, facing the challenges of the times.

Another element contributing to the success of the mutual partnership model is that sharing in God’s mission requires a mutual openness in correcting mistakes, improving relationships, and taking options. Between 1983 and 2004 the Executive Committee of the UEPV promoted an open dialogue with all the congregations that left that denomination between 1981 and 1983. Many of those congregations returned to the full membership in the UEPV, and others remain in cordial and open communication, sharing in many aspects of mission. The Executive Committee of the UEPV conducted a discernment process between 1984 and 1986 on ecumenical commitment, leading to a public statement at the XXX Convention at Hosanna Church in Guanare, August, 1986. At the XXXI Convention in “Comunidad El Triunfo” in Valencia, 1987, the UEPV publicly declared its ecumenical vocation, reaffirmed its Pentecostal identity, and affirmed its preferential option for the poor. This whole process made it clear that UEPV wanted to continue in an ecumenical partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the ecumenical movement in Latin America and the rest of the world.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela have moved forward in mission toward equality and justice and have proven that a partnership based on mutual respect and trust and the sharing of resources at all levels--human, financial, spiritual, educational, and theological--is the best foundation for an ongoing partnership in God’s mission.

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